

# OCCASIONAL PAPERS IN ROMANIAN STUDIES

No. 3

Moldova, Bessarabia, Transnistria

*Edited by*

REBECCA HAYNES



School of Slavonic and East European Studies  
University College London



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*Edited with an Historical Introduction By*

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2003

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## Notes on Contributors

**Dennis Deletant** is Professor in Romanian Studies at SSEES-UCL.

**Natalia Gherman** is Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova to Austria and Head of the Moldovan Mission to the OSCE and UN Agencies in Vienna.

**Rebecca Haynes** is Lecturer in Romanian Studies at SSEES-UCL.

**Ronald J. Hill** is Professor of Comparative Government at Trinity College Dublin.

**Adrian Pop** is Professor at the Faculty of Political Sciences at the 'Dimitrie Cantemir' Christian University in Bucharest.

**Trevor R. W. Waters** has recently retired from his post as Senior Lecturer at the Conflict Studies Research Centre, Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst.



## Historical Introduction

Rebecca Haynes

The articles which follow are the product of a conference held at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London in 1999 on the history and contemporary affairs of Moldova, Bessarabia and Transnistria. Most of the papers deal with the Transnistrian dispute, as it developed over the course of the 1990s, but others consider economic conditions in the Republic of Moldova and Romanian policy towards the Jews during the Second World War.

A common point in many of these articles is the issue of the Republic of Moldova's relations with the Russians and Ukrainians, both inside and outside the Republic, and of Romania's own relations with Moldova. Underlying this issue is the question of national identity. Are the Moldovans and Romanians 'one nation', and if so, what implications follow for statehood? Or is there a distinct 'Moldovan' identity, which justifies the maintenance of a separate Moldovan state? And if a distinct 'Moldovan' identity exists, is it connected in any way with the Moldovans' historic 'co-habitation' with the Slavonic peoples both west and east of the Dnestr river?

In seeking to write a historical introduction to these essays one issue becomes clear. The Moldovans', and indeed the Romanians', often complicated relations with the Ukrainians and Russians are not simply the product of Moldova's incorporation within the Soviet Union after the Second World War, but stretch back to the very foundation of the principality of Moldova in the Middle Ages. It is for this reason appropriate to consider the issue of identity in contemporary Moldova, and the Transnistrian dispute, in a long-term historical perspective, and not simply as a product of more recent events.

This historical introduction will, therefore, concentrate overwhelmingly on the period up to the Second World War. For the Soviet Union's involvement in Moldova in the post-war era, and the unfolding of the Transnistrian dispute, the reader can do no better than to study Charles

King's seminal book, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, (Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, 2000).

Finally, I would like to thank those who made possible the original 'Moldova, Bessarabia, Transnistria' conference, as well as the publication of this volume. These include the Foreign and Commonwealth Office through whose generosity the conference took place. I would also like to thank Professor Michael Branch, former director of the School, and Professor George Kolankiewicz, the current director, who have made possible the publication of this volume. My thanks are also due to Professor Dennis Deletant and Dr Martyn Rady at the School for offering their comments on the following text.

\*

The history of Moldova poses problems of both a practical and an intellectual nature. Amongst the former, is the lack of reliable historical data and basic information regarding Moldova. This is itself largely a result of the region's history, which, on account of its frequent wars, changes of government and disputed sovereignty, has made accurate and continuous record keeping impossible. In addition, the country's main centres of scholarly activity, the monasteries, have suffered themselves through war and plunder over the centuries. The historian is thus left with a number of often conflicting and incomplete accounts with which to develop his narrative.

The intellectual problems confronted in writing a history of Moldova, however, pose even greater challenges. The first of these is the problem of territorial definition. Today 'Moldova' commonly refers to the Republic of that name which declared its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. The Republic lies between the Prut and Dnestr rivers and is bordered by the Romanian state in the west. It is otherwise surrounded entirely by Ukrainian territory. 'Moldova' is also, however, the name of the eastern part of the modern Romanian state. The two 'Moldovas' of today previously constituted the principality of Moldova which was founded in the fourteenth century and which in the nineteenth century joined with Wallachia to form the kingdom of Romania. The lands of the present-day Republic of Moldova were a part of the principality of Moldova until 1812 when they were annexed by Russia. The reader may well wonder what the relationship is between the principality of Moldova and 'Moldavia', a name often found in English-language histories of the area. 'Moldavia' is, however, simply the Latinized form of Moldova, and gained currency in Europe only from the eighteenth century onwards. There is also the frequent use in historical literature of the name



‘Bessarabia’ to refer to the lands between the Prut and Dnestr rivers which were seized by Russia from the principality of Moldova in 1812. Bessarabia is the Latinized form of the Romanian *Basarabia*, the etymology and meaning of which we will explain further below (pp. 74–5). The area of the modern Republic of Moldova only, however, corresponds in part to the area of nineteenth-century Bessarabia.

The second intellectual problem regarding the history of the Republic of Moldova is the question of national description and of language, which since the nineteenth century has been generally understood as the badge of identity. Most historians and commentators in Romania have argued that the ‘Moldovan’ language, adopted as the Republic’s official language in 1994, is a dialect of Romanian and, therefore, describe the language as ‘Romanian’ and the people of Moldova as ‘Romanians’. Many people in Moldova would concur with this view and regard themselves as being thus ‘Romanians’.

Moldovan nationalists within the present-day Republic argue, however, that although closely related to the Romanians, the Moldovans form a distinct ethnic and linguistic group, with a separate historical development. Complicated as they are, however, these problems of definition are by no means unique to Moldova. Throughout Eastern Europe, both historic ‘rights’ to territories and national identities are often subject to intensive scrutiny and debate. Indeed, the problems of Moldovan history are the problems of East European history writ small. The example of the Republic of Moldova’s Ukrainian neighbour, whose territory and identity are still hotly contested, is a further illustration. Not only is the territory of Ukraine also a historically ‘contested space’, but Ukrainian identity itself retains an ambiguity, being variously presented as Ukrainian, Little Russian and Ruthene.<sup>1</sup>

The task of writing a history of Moldova is rendered yet more difficult by the partialities of the secondary historical literature. In geographical areas where territorial ‘rights’ and national identities are disputed, all historical statements carry political resonances. Thus, to describe the majority-inhabitants of nineteenth century Russian-ruled Bessarabia as ‘Romanians’, as many Romanian historians are wont, is to imply their affinity with the Romanians living west of the River Prut and to justify their incorporation into the Romanian state in 1918. Soviet historians, on the other hand, often denied any relationship between the Romanian-speaking inhabitants of Bessarabia and the Romanians, and referred to them as ‘Moldovans’. In this way they were able to justify the separate path taken by Moldova east of the River Prut during and after the Second World War.

For Western historians and commentators, on the other hand, Moldova and the region to which it belongs, has long been considered as part of Europe's 'periphery'. Cut off from the cultural and political influences that have created modern Europe, the area is often regarded as a 'backwater' and little more than a curiosity. In reality, however, the principality of Moldova was, as it emerged in the medieval period, far from being on the periphery of 'Europe'. Both the principality of Moldova, and its sister-principality of Wallachia (known as 'Țara Românească' to the Romanians) were subject to the major European political and cultural currents of the time. In particular, the principalities were both the recipients of, and contributors to, the store of Byzantine Orthodox learning and culture both before and after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Far from being on Europe's 'periphery', the principalities developed out of, and were at the heart of, European Orthodox civilization.

The influences which fed the creation and development of the two principalities were not, however, identical. In the Middle Ages Wallachia was considerably more dominated by the Catholic Kingdom of Hungary than Moldova, as well as by the Serbian and Bulgarian South Slavs. It was largely on account of its proximity to the Balkans that Wallachia was incorporated into the religious and cultural sphere of Byzantium in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In subsequent centuries, the Greek-Byzantine influence in Wallachia was especially strong. Moldova, on the other hand, while subject to similar cultural movements, was heavily influenced by Orthodox currents stemming from Kiev and the lands of Poland-Lithuania. In more recent centuries, Russian military and cultural influences have also been a major factor in Moldova's development. While being united to Wallachia by language, therefore, other cultural influences have pulled Moldova northwards and eastwards and have shaped a different history.

### *The Early History and the Foundation of the Principality of Moldova*

In the fourth and third centuries BC, the lands which comprise present-day Romania and the Republic of Moldova were inhabited by Thracian tribes, known as the Getae and Dacians. These tribes already had links with the ancient Hellenic world through the Greek colonies situated on the coast of the Black Sea. These included Tyras (later Cetatea Albă), on the mouth of the Dnestr estuary, which had been established in the sixth century BC. The future Romanian lands subsequently fell under



Roman control. In 106 AD, the Romans, led by Emperor Trajan, destroyed the kingdom of the Dacians and divided these lands between the Roman provinces of Dacia and Moesia Inferior. The latter included within it the Black Sea coastal strip between the rivers Prut and Dneestr where Trajan's Wall was built, remnants of which are still visible. The territory of the present-day Republic of Moldova remained, however, outside the Roman Empire. Although Dacia and Moesia Inferior were subject to romanization and colonization, Roman rule in the area proved relatively short-lived. As a result of barbarian attacks, the Roman legions withdrew south of the River Danube in 273 AD, leaving the native inhabitants north of the river to their fate. Organized political and cultural life was not to re-emerge in the area for over a millennium. Nevertheless, the period of Roman rule left in its train a population sufficiently romanized to have adopted a language based on vulgar Roman Latin which forms the basis of modern Romanian.

The centuries following the withdrawal of the Roman legions were marked by the ebb and flow of nomadic tribes who traversed, or made their temporary home, on the lands of present-day Romania. The territory which was later to make up the Moldovan principality, although consisting of wooded mountains to the north, and bounded by the high peaks of the Carpathian mountains to the west, consists mainly of hilly plains, extending down to a plateau on the Black Sea coast. As an extension of the Eurasian steppes, the plains of 'Moldova' acted as an open road for the barbarian tribes which sought to plunder the riches of the Roman and Byzantine empires. Following the division of the empire at the end of the third century, East Rome (later Byzantium) retained control of the fortifications on the lower Danube *limes*. The barbarians, however, repeatedly succeeded in breaching the Danube defences and bore down on the Roman cities of the Balkan peninsula, frequently threatening Constantinople itself.

The third century had already been marked by the arrival of the Germanic Goths, and these were followed by assorted tribes of Huns, Gepids, and Avars. The subsequent arrival of the Slavs in the Danube Basin and the Balkan peninsula in the late sixth century and the Bulgars in the seventh century was to have a profound effect on the romance-speaking population which had been left behind in old Roman Dacia, cutting them off from direct contact with the Byzantine empire for many centuries.

It is at this point appropriate to discuss the so-called 'Daco-Roman continuity theory'. According to this view of Romanian ethno-genesis, the modern Romanians are descended from the Dacians, who intermarried

with the Roman colonists and eventually adopted their language. The 'Daco-Romans' remained in Dacia following the withdrawal of the Roman legions in 273 AD and, so it is argued, retained their Latin identity and tongue in the face of subsequent barbarian invasions through their timely retreat into the mountains of Transylvania. This argument, put forward most strongly by Romanian historians in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, was used to justify the creation of the modern Romanian state by claiming a continuous and substantial Romanian presence north of the Danube from Roman times onwards. Such historians have usually also denied that the Slavs exercised any important influence on the development of the Romanian nation. In a work for foreign consumption, published in 1925, Nicolae Iorga, Romania's most famous historian and also its most prolific, argued that the Slavonic influence on the Romanians following the Balkan invasions 'is not supported by a study either of the historical sources or of national customs and language'.<sup>2</sup>

This view of Romanian origins came to dominate Romanian historiography, particularly during the 1980s under the Ceaușescu regime.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, a number of leading Romanian scholars had long recognized the importance of the Slavonic influence in Romanian identity and culture. Romania's first major Slavist, Bogdan P. Hasdeu, born in Russian-ruled Bessarabia in 1838, argued that the Romanians were a product of a fusion of Thracians, Dacians, Romans and Slavs and had developed as a distinct people on both sides of the Danube river. According to another argument, now associated with Hungarian historians, but previously expounded by a number of eminent Romanian historians such as Radu Rosetti (1853–1926) and Gheorge Brătianu (1898–1953), the 'Romanians' were not the descendants of the early Dacians but of a romance-speaking population from the Balkans who only arrived north of the Danube many centuries after the withdrawal of the Romans. On this basis, Rosetti argued that the Romanians were, in fact, 'romanized Slavs' who fled north of the Danube to escape the grasping hands of Byzantine tax-collectors. According to Brătianu, contacts between the romanized population north and south of the Danube did not cease with the formal withdrawal of the legions in 273 AD. The arrival of the Slavs in the Balkans in the late sixth century, however, modified the nascent 'Romanian' language and forced part of the romanized population to flee north of the Danube.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever the historical veracity of these different theories regarding the ethno-genesis of the Romanian people, the Slavs, although eventually absorbed into the romance-speaking population in the Danube Basin,



have left a strong imprint on the Romanian language. Many Romanian placenames, and almost one-fifth of the vocabulary in modern Romanian, is of Slavonic origin. Moreover, it was, as we shall see, largely through their Slavonic neighbours that the inhabitants of the future Moldovan and Wallachian principalities were to become incorporated into the religious and cultural life of Orthodox Christian Byzantium.

The Slavs, however, were by no means the last of the barbarian tribes to enter the territory of, and have an influence upon, the future principality. The ninth century saw the arrival of the pagan Hungarians in the Danube Basin, who within the space of only several hundred years had created a flourishing kingdom and embraced Catholicism. The foundation of the Moldovan principality, as it turned out, was to be intimately bound up with the continued expansion of Hungarian royal authority in the region. The Hungarian invaders were followed by the Turkic Pechenegs in the tenth century, and by another Turkic tribe, the Cumans, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which made its temporary home between the Siret and Dnestr rivers, within the lands of the future Moldovan principality. Like the Slavs, the Cumans had a lasting effect on many Moldovan placenames and were responsible for the names of a number of towns, which were to become important in the future principality, including Tighina, Hotin and Chişinau.<sup>5</sup>

The Hungarian kings had already secured control over the Transylvanian region in the tenth century, and thereafter began to expand the kingdom beyond the Carpathian mountains. King Andrew II (reigned 1205–1235) continued King Stephen's policy of Catholic proselytizing in the Danube Basin through his conversion of the pagan Cumans. Andrew then created a Catholic bishopric of 'Cumania' with its seat at Brassó (Rom. Braşov), later (and erroneously) identified with the see of Milcovia which was constituted in the fourteenth century. The area of the bishopric of Cumania covered roughly the south-west of the future Moldovan principality, north-east of the future Wallachia and south-east Transylvania.<sup>6</sup>

The last of the major barbarian onslaughts into central and eastern Europe was the Tatar invasion of 1241 which brought the activities of the Catholic bishopric of Cumania to a halt. It was to be another century before the Hungarians were able to re-establish Hungarian supremacy east of the Carpathians. This was achieved as a result of the successful expedition led by King Louis of Anjou in 1345 who founded the Milcovia bishopric shortly afterwards.

According to numerous Moldovan chroniclers from the sixteenth century onwards, the Moldovan 'foundation myth' runs roughly as

follows. In 1359 a certain Dragoș came down, or, 'dismounted' (Rom. *descălecat*) from the mountains of Transylvania or Maramureș on to the uninhabited plains east of the Carpathians while hunting the wild aurochs (a type of bison). During the hunt, Dragoș' favourite hound, Molda, was drowned in a river. Dragoș and his followers, therefore, named the river 'Moldova' in commemoration of the hound and subsequently named their new country after the river. Dragoș took the auroch's head as his heraldic shield, which became the symbol of the new principality.<sup>7</sup> Historians have found it hard, however, to disentangle myth and legend from the events. Different opinions exist regarding not only the date of the principality's foundation, but also its *dramatis personae*. As one historian has written, 'according to some Moldova is founded by Dragoș, according to others by Bogdan. According to some, Dragoș is the son of Bogdan, while according to others Bogdan is one of the descendants of Dragoș'.<sup>8</sup> According to Dennis Deletant and many Hungarian historians, Dragoș probably began his rule in Moldova in fief to the Hungarian crown and as a vassal of King Louis. Meanwhile Bogdan, generally regarded as the first independent ruler of Moldova, secured his control in 1363 and reigned until around 1367.<sup>9</sup>

Two Hungarian documents give us indications of the principality's emergence and are amongst the earliest documents in which the name 'Moldova' is recorded. In 1360, King Louis conferred upon Dragoș six villages in the Hungarian county of Maramureș as recompense for his military service in Moldova against 'rebellious Vlachs' ('plures Olachos rebellantes').<sup>10</sup> Five years later, in 1365, Louis conferred upon Balç, Dragoș' grandson, estates in Maramureș, that had formerly belonged to Bogdan, who was now in 'occupation' of Moldova.<sup>11</sup> It seems that Bogdan had entered Moldova and ejected the 'pro-Hungarian' Saș, Dragoș' son, and repulsed various Hungarian attempts to re-establish King Louis' authority in Moldova, including one by Balç, Dragoș' grandson. Bogdan's territory, however, extended only from the Carpathian mountains to the Siret river, with the town of Baia as the seat of his court.<sup>12</sup>

What then were Bogdan's motives in entering Moldova, ejecting its pro-Hungarian ruler and establishing himself as an independent ruler? It is likely that Bogdan, who by all accounts was an adherent of the Orthodox church, fled from Maramureș, together with other Romanian-speakers in order to escape from the strong Catholic proselytizing which was taking place in Transylvania and Maramureș under Hungarian auspices in the fourteenth century.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, far from being uninhabited lands, as the chroniclers claim, the lands east of the Carpathians may already have become a place of refuge for Romanian-speakers, and others,



of the Orthodox faith well before Dragoș' 'foundation' of the principality.

Both archaeological and historical evidence suggest that a significant Romanian-speaking population had already established itself in the area in the centuries before the arrival of Dragoș, Bogdan and their followers. The Byzantine chronicle of Nicetas Choniates records the seizure of Andronicus Comnenus by 'Vlachs' on the borders of Galicia in 1164.<sup>14</sup> Archaeological excavations have revealed a long continuity of settlement by Romanian-speakers east of the Carpathians, as well as interchange, through the mountain passes, with the Romanian-speaking population in Transylvania and Maramureș. In other words, migration east of the Carpathians was gradual, and probably occasioned by a mixture of religious persecution and economic motives.<sup>15</sup>

The seventeenth-century Moldovan chronicler, Grigore Ureche, described Dragoș and his followers as *păștori*, in other words, shepherds.<sup>16</sup> It is certainly possible that some of the Romanians who migrated east of the Carpathians were, as Ureche suggests, shepherds following a transhumance lifestyle. Others were, however, settled agriculturalists living under the authority of a local village leader, a *cneaz*, who was himself subject to the authority of a leader with military and judicial authority, the *voevod*.<sup>17</sup> Significantly, both these terms for expressing important social institutions are of Slavonic origin, which is evidence for the Romanian-speakers' co-habitation with, and eventual absorption of, the Slavonic peoples with whom they lived.

In addition to the Slavonic migrations of the sixth and seventh centuries into the Balkans, the ninth and tenth centuries saw the movements of East Slav Ruthenes from the Kievan Rus' lands into what was to become northern Moldova. Much of the territory of the future Moldovan principality was subject to the influence of the Kievan Rus' principality during the tenth and eleventh centuries, and from its appanages following the break-up of Kievan Rus' in the mid-eleventh century. In particular, the authority of the Galician principality probably stretched as far as the Middle Dnestr and the upper reaches of the Prut river. At the close of the twelfth century, the principalities of Galicia and Volhynia were united and continued to exert a degree of authority over the future Moldovan lands. Moreover, the Hungarian country of Maramureș, where Bogdan had owned his estates before becoming ruler of Moldova, was clearly inhabited by Ruthenes, as well as Hungarians and Romanian-speakers, well before the fourteenth century.

It seems, therefore, that many Ruthenes were already established in village communities before the 'foundation' of Moldova in the fourteenth century. A folk-memory of the Ruthene presence east of the Carpathians

may be preserved in the legend that when Dragoş entered the plains of Moldova he found only one man living there. This was a certain Ruthene named Etzko who sustained his existence entirely on the produce of his bees.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the Slavonic population, it is clear that both Hungarians and German Saxons were also present in Moldova well before the fourteenth century. The Saxons, in establishing themselves as miners and traders, were responsible for founding a number of urban settlements, including those later known to the Moldovans as Baia, Siret and Suceava, which successively housed the Moldovan princely court in the late fourteenth century.<sup>19</sup> According to a Saxon historian writing in the late nineteenth century, there were also family ties between the new princely family and the Saxons. Thus we are told that Dragoş and his followers entered Moldova with many Hungarians and Saxons. Dragoş thereafter took a Saxon for his wife and their son was named Saş, meaning Saxon, in her honour.<sup>20</sup>

We will now briefly discuss the etymology of the principality's name, which is probably linked to Moldova's economically important Saxon population, although a number of other fanciful suggestions have been put forward. Adam Neale, for example, a British visitor to Moldova in the early nineteenth century, claimed that the principality was named after the ancient god Zalmoxis, the 'eternal priest' or *Mollah*. 'Moldavia' was thus a corruption of *Mollah-div-ia*, meaning 'territory of the immortal Mollah'.<sup>21</sup> More plausibly, the historians Constantin and Dinu Giurescu have argued that 'Moldova' is a derivation of *molid*, a Romanian word meaning a spruce-tree, and a reference to the evergreen forests which covered most of Moldova in the medieval period.<sup>22</sup> Other scholars, however, claim that the name is Germanic in origin, in keeping with the early presence of these people in the area, stretching right back to the period of the Gothic invasions in the third century AD. Thus, it has been argued that the principality did indeed take its name from the River Moldova (a tributary of the Siret river) but that this derives not from the name of Dragoş' hound but instead from the Gothic word *mulde* (or *molda*) meaning 'loose earth'.<sup>23</sup> The name would thus correspond to the German name for the river in Bohemia, *Moldau* (*Vltava* in Czech), and to the River *Mulde*, a tributary of the Elbe, on the banks of which the fortress of Colditz was constructed.

The presence of German colonists and traders in Moldova at the time of its foundation suggests one reason for Hungarian interest in the region, namely its economic and commercial worth.<sup>24</sup> The lands of the future Moldova had long been an important trading route for goods coming from



north-west Europe (Flanders and the Hanseatic ports) and from the Baltic to the Black Sea and thence to Byzantium or the Mediterranean. Even in remote antiquity, this route had been used for the transportation of amber from the Baltic to the Hellenic cities. Genoese and Venetian traders had established a number of trading colonies on the Black Sea by the fourteenth century of which two were to become particularly important for the future principality: Kilia (Rom. Chilia, originally a Byzantine foundation) on the mouth of the Danube, and Maurocastro (Rom. Cetatea Albă, originally the ancient Greek trading colony of Tyras) on the mouth of the Dnestr. Both towns were important for the shipping of grain and other foodstuffs from the Danube plain to Byzantium, as well as cloth coming from northern Europe, and for the export of Byzantine 'luxury' goods to central and northern Europe. During the fourteenth century, authority over the 'Moldovan' lands, which linked the Black Sea ports to the rest of central and northern Europe, was contested by the Hungarian and Polish monarchs, who sought to secure control over the nascent principality and its trade to their own advantage.

The Hungarian king, who had already secured his suzerainty over the principality of Wallachia, founded by Basarab I in c. 1330, sought control over the lands to the south and east of the Carpathians in order to regulate the trade from Hungary and Transylvania which passed along the Danube river to the Black Sea. The port of Chilia on the Danube mouth with its links to Constantinople was particularly coveted by the Hungarians and their Wallachian vassals. Even after Bogdan's successful bid for independence from Hungarian vassalage in the 1360s, the Moldovan principality continued to be subject to Hungarian political pressure. A new power was, however, rising on the principality's northern border. In the 1340s, the expanding Polish kingdom had taken control of the principality of Galicia-Volhynia, together with the city of Lvov, an important economic centre for German traders which was linked to the Hanseatic ports in northern Europe. It was only natural that the Polish king should cast his eye over the Moldovan lands which linked Lvov to the Black Sea port of Maurocastro (Rom. Cetatea Albă), with its large Genoese trading community. The foundation and development of the Moldovan principality in the fourteenth century was, therefore, played out against the background of Hungarian and Polish economic and political rivalry in the area. The Moldovan rulers' close relations with the Polish kingdom yielded, however, an effective counterweight to Hungarian attempts to reassert political hegemony over the Moldovan lands.

As well as being contested by the Hungarian and Polish kingdoms,

Moldova was also the subject of competition between Roman Catholic and Byzantine Orthodox Christianity. It will be recalled that Bogdan, who secured Moldova's independence from Hungary, was of the Orthodox faith. Hungarian Catholic pressure, however, continued to threaten the new state and Bogdan's son and successor, Lațcu (reigned 1365–c. 1375) duly underwent a 'conversion' to Catholicism, which was probably politically motivated.<sup>25</sup> Lațcu's conversion was rendered necessary by the union of the Hungarian and Polish crowns under Louis of Anjou in 1370, which lasted until Louis' death in 1382 and which put a temporary end to Moldova's strategy of 'balancing' between Hungary and Poland. In addition, considerable pressure was exerted at this time by Franciscan and Dominican missionaries. In 1370, therefore, Lațcu made a direct request to the pope, asking him to establish a Catholic bishopric at Siret. The pope duly agreed and placed the bishopric under immediate papal control. Lațcu's decision to make a personal appeal to Rome, thereby avoiding the mediation of the Hungarian ecclesiastical authorities, together with his decision to move his court to Siret, was designed to ensure the independence of Moldova from Hungarian control. At the same time, Lațcu placated King Louis through his espousal of the Catholic faith. That Lațcu's acceptance of Catholicism was politically motivated, rather than genuine, is suggested by his wife and daughter's continued adherence to Orthodoxy. Furthermore, on his death Lațcu was buried not at Siret, but in the church of St Nicholas in Rădăuți, where his father, Bogdan, had established an Orthodox bishopric, which served as the principality's *de facto* metropolitanate.

Lațcu's successor, Petru Mușat I (reigned c. 1375–1391), founder of the house of Mușat which reigned in the principality until the end of the sixteenth century, was also of Orthodox faith. This did not prevent Mușat, however, from seeking the very closest political relations with Catholic Poland, as a counter-weight to Hungary. Following the death of Louis of Anjou in 1382, the Hungarian and Polish kingdoms were once again separate, but in 1386 the crowns of Poland and Lithuania were united. In the following year, Petru Mușat paid homage to the Polish-Lithuanian king, Wladislas Jagiello I, as his feudal overlord. Through his treaty with Poland, Mușat and his boyars swore to fight for the Polish king against his enemies. Cordial relations between the two countries were sealed by Mușat's marriage to Wladislas's sister.

Crucial as these links were in securing Moldova's continued independence from Hungary, Petru Mușat's oath of fealty to the Polish-Lithuanian king imposed a limit on his independence. Nevertheless, the territorial extent of the principality continued to grow with the extension



of the border to the River Dnestr in the north through the incorporation of the fortress of Hotin, wrested from Tatar control. The royal court was once again transferred, this time to Suceava which was to become the seat of the future Moldovan Orthodox metropolitanate.<sup>26</sup>

The creation of the metropolitanate in the 1380s did not come about without conflict between the Moldovan ruler and the patriarch of Constantinople. Despite his allegiance to Orthodox Christianity, Muşat, like the Orthodox princes of Kiev, attempted to secure a degree of ecclesiastical autonomy for himself. The metropolitans of Kiev were often nominated by the rulers of Kiev and only subsequently confirmed by the patriarch of Constantinople. In similar fashion, Muşat made his own appointments, designating his relative, Iosif, a monk from Neamţ monastery founded by Muşat in 1383, to serve as the first metropolitan. Iosif's colleague, Meletie, was appointed as bishop of Rădăuţi. Both were consecrated by the metropolitan of Galicia, based at Halych, on the Upper Dnestr, whose authority, despite the Polish kingdom's increasingly Catholic complexion, ran along the whole course of the Dnestr river. This proved unacceptable to the patriarch of Constantinople who, despite his wish to establish a metropolitanate in Moldova as a bulwark against Catholicism, sought to appoint a Greek, through whom he could exert control. The issue was only resolved after the death of the two chief protagonists. In 1401, shortly after the accession of Alexander the Good (reigned 1400–1432) to the Moldovan throne, the new patriarch confirmed Iosif's appointment as the head of the metropolitanate of Moldova and Suceava. As its name suggests, the metropolitanate's see was based at Suceava, the princely capital.<sup>27</sup>

As we have seen, however, there was clearly an Orthodox tradition in the Moldovan lands even before Bogdan began his reign in the mid-fourteenth century. The Byzantine emperors were rarely able to secure direct or sustained political or ecclesiastical control over the lands of the future Moldovan and Wallachian principalities.<sup>28</sup> The area was nevertheless within the 'sphere of influence' of Byzantine traders and diplomats, as well as Byzantine Orthodox missionaries and the numerous monastic foundations in the Balkans, Black Sea region and the Crimean steppes.<sup>29</sup>

The South and East Slavs had been successfully converted to Orthodox Christianity during the ninth and tenth centuries. Although there were remnants of Christian communities dating back to Roman times in the Danube Basin and delta, most of the Romanian-speakers in the region were probably converted to Orthodoxy in the late ninth or early tenth centuries by their Bulgarian neighbours. Orthodox religious life in the lands of the future Moldova was also dependent to some degree on the

metropolitanate of Kiev and subsequently the metropolitanate of Galicia at Halych, to which Petru Muşat turned in his bid to establish an organized church structure in Moldova.<sup>30</sup> These connections with the Orthodox world, however, did not prevent the representatives of the Roman Catholic church in the region from contesting the primacy of Byzantine Christianity. In a similar fashion, the Byzantine church continued to have considerable influence in Hungary well into the thirteenth century, and even beyond.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, it was Byzantine Orthodox Christianity which eventually prevailed amongst the Romanian-speaking Moldovans and Wallachians.

### *The Middle Ages: The Reigns of Alexander the Good and Stephen the Great*

It was during the reign of Alexander the Good (reigned 1400–1432) that Moldova became fully integrated into the religious and cultural life of Byzantine Christianity. This followed the arrival of the patriarchal delegation to the principality in 1401 to confirm the creation of the Metropolitanate of Moldova and Suceava. This process of incorporation into the Byzantine world had already begun in Moldova's sister principality of Wallachia with the creation of the Orthodox metropolitanate of *Ungrovlachia* based at Curtea de Argeş in 1359.

The language through which the Romanian-speaking Moldovans and Wallachians received the Byzantine Orthodox liturgy and religious literature was Church Slavonic (now usually referred to as 'Old Church Slavonic'). The conversion to Orthodox Christianity of the Slavs by Byzantine missionaries and monks had been aided by, and was dependent upon, the invention of a Slavonic alphabet by SS Cyril and Methodius and their followers. Through this alphabet the Byzantine liturgy, as well as the Holy Scriptures, lives of saints and other religious, and even profane, texts were translated from Greek into the Slavonic language. By the late ninth century the Bulgarians had accepted Old Church Slavonic and the Romanian-speakers in the region had probably adopted Old Church Slavonic for use in the Byzantine liturgy by the eleventh century, through the mediation of Bulgarian Orthodox clergymen and monks.<sup>32</sup> It was thus the Bulgarian variant of Old Church Slavonic in particular which was most frequently used in the principalities over the following centuries for copying Slavonic texts or translating from Byzantine-Greek originals. To this day, Romanian religious terminology is infused with words of Slavonic and Greek origin, as well as terms derived from Latin originals.<sup>33</sup> The



Bulgarian variant of Old Church Slavonic was also used for original works of a more creative nature, such as the 'Life of St John the New', written by the Bulgarian clergyman, Grigore Țamblac, who led the patriarchal delegation which had arrived in Moldova in 1401.

The emergence of the Moldovan and Wallachian principalities as political entities in the fourteenth century had the effect of transforming Old Church Slavonic into the written language of the court, as well as that of the church, through its adoption by the chancellery. Old Church Slavonic dominated both these institutions in the principalities until well into the seventeenth century, although the court chancelleries also drew up documents in Latin and German where necessary. Old Church Slavonic, however, underwent certain modifications throughout the Orthodox world under the influences of the local spoken languages. In Moldova the script underwent some slight mutation as a result of the gradual permeation of Polish and East Slav linguistic influences.<sup>34</sup> The centrality of Old Church Slavonic in the early centuries of the principalities' existence is reflected in that fact it was the Old Church Slavonic alphabet which was used to give written form to the Romanian language. This alphabet was only replaced by the Latin script in the principalities in the mid-nineteenth century.

Institutional religious life in Moldova, based on the Byzantine model, also began to flourish during Alexander the Good's long reign. Alexander founded an Orthodox bishopric at Roman, as well as re-establishing the bishopric set up by Bogdan I at Rădăuți. He built a number of churches and his monastic foundations included Moldovița and Bistrița in northern Moldova, as well as Căpriană and Văzărești east of the River Prut. These monasteries shared in the Hesychast tradition, with its stress on inner silence and meditative contemplation, already established at Petru Mușat's foundation at Neamț, which was itself indebted to the Hesychast traditions emanating from Wallachia and elsewhere in the Balkans. The style of ecclesiastical architecture and painting employed during Alexander's reign was also based on the Byzantine style, together with the slight local variations already visible in the Orthodox lands surrounding Moldova, such as those of the Serbian 'Morava' school. The richly decorated religious embroideries and vestments produced during Alexander's reign also owed their designs to Byzantine originals.

Bistrița and Neamț monasteries became the main Moldovan schools for the copying of Old Church Slavonic religious texts from Bulgarian and Serbian, as well as for the translation of Byzantine-Greek originals. An important school of calligraphy and manuscript illumination was also established at Neamț monastery during Alexander's reign. One of the



many beautiful works produced by the school was a copy of an illuminated Slavonic gospel, currently held in the Bodleian Library in Oxford.<sup>35</sup>

Orthodox clergymen, monks and scholars of Slavonic and Greek origin, travelled extensively through the principalities in the medieval period, assisting in the diffusion of Byzantine religion and culture. The career of Grigore Țamblac is a case in point. A monk from Trnovo in Bulgaria, which was itself a leading cultural centre, Țamblac had already visited Serbia, Mount Athos (the home of the Hesychast movement in the Orthodox world) and Constantinople before his arrival in Moldova. Here he was abbot of Neamț monastery from 1403 until 1415. Famed for his sermons in Old Church Slavonic, Țamblac did much to confirm and institutionalize the presence of the Byzantine Orthodox liturgy and religious literature within the Moldovan church in its Slavonic form. He became metropolitan of Kiev in 1415 and in this capacity he helped to strengthen relations between the world of the Orthodox East Slavs and the Moldovans.<sup>36</sup>

The Byzantine model was, however, also adopted during Alexander's reign in the day-to-day life of the princely court at Suceava.<sup>37</sup> The ceremonial of the court displayed the influence of the imperial court at Constantinople, which was itself based upon the elaborate ritual of the Orthodox church. Additionally a system of court officials began to crystallize under Alexander's direction, with titles derived either directly from the Greek spoken at the imperial court, such as *logofăt* meaning chancellor, or in Slavonic translation, such as *stolnic* meaning high steward, or *paharnic*, cup-bearer. Once again, this system and nomenclature of court officials probably arrived in Moldova through the mediation of the Bulgarian or Serbian royal courts, where Byzantine influence had long been apparent.

Alexander ruled with the aid of a princely council, or *Sfatul Domnesc*, consisting of advisers drawn from amongst the boyars, that is the landed nobles, from whose ranks court officials were drawn. During his reign, Alexander was able to maintain royal authority over the boyars, leading to a relatively long period of political stability which, as we shall see, proved to be a rare event in the principality's history.

Alexander's official title was *domn*, from the Latin, *dominus*, which is often translated as prince. In medieval written documents, the Moldovan and Wallachian princes were often referred to as *hospodar*, the Slavonic translation of *domn*, or as *voievod*. Alexander often appropriated for himself the description *autocrat*, a name usually only applied in this period to the emperor in Constantinople himself, and reflecting the Byzantine belief that the emperor's sovereignty was absolute and universal,

mirroring that of God in heaven. As a Romanian historian has noted, 'Alexander inherited from the Byzantine world his conception of power and the role of the ruler in the life of the state'.<sup>38</sup>

The reality of the small principality's existence, however, and the practical extent of Alexander's power were more limited than his appropriation of Byzantine political and ecclesiastical models suggests. The prince's independence and autonomy were circumscribed by the fact that Moldova had been effectively held in fief from the Polish-Lithuanian crown since Petru Muşat's oath of allegiance to Wladislas Jagiello in 1387. Indeed, so much did the Polish king regard Moldova as a component part of his kingdom, that he awarded several estates in Moldova to his relatives shortly after Alexander's accession to the Moldovan throne.<sup>39</sup> Alexander himself paid homage to the Polish king five times during the course of his reign and was on several occasions obliged to help the Polish king against his adversaries, the Teutonic knights. While fealty to the Polish monarch, who had many Orthodox subjects, saved Moldova from the immediate clutches of her powerful Catholic Hungarian neighbour, a treaty drawn up between Poland-Lithuania and Hungary in 1412 reflected the potential fragility of Moldova's territorial integrity and the limitations of her ruler's absolutist aspirations.<sup>40</sup>

The treaty confirmed Moldova's status as a vassal of Poland-Lithuania, but laid certain military obligations upon Moldova to fight for the Hungarians in the event of an Ottoman Turkish attack. Failure to perform such services would lead to the partition of the principality: the north and east, with the port of Cetatea Albă, falling to Poland, and the south and west, with the port of Chilia, to Hungary. Although the partition did not take place, its stipulations reflected not only Moldova's potential vulnerability, but also the territorial expansion and economic growth which had taken place under Alexander which now prompted Moldova's neighbours to cast covetous eyes upon her.

When Alexander came to the throne in 1400, Moldova's borders had only extended to the River Dnestr in the north, at Hotin.<sup>41</sup> The rest of the river was effectively controlled by the Muslim Tatars, including Cetatea Albă, although this remained a major Genoese trading port. In 1408 Alexander successfully pushed the Tatars beyond the Dnestr and secured his position on the river at Tighina. From here, Alexander struck down towards the Dnestr estuary and seized Cetatea Albă where the Genoese traders obligingly accepted his suzerainty. Alexander thus established the Dnestr river as Moldova's eastern border, where it remained until Russia annexed the lands between the Prut and Dnestr rivers in 1812. Simultaneously, by incorporating Cetatea Albă into Moldova, Alexander



asserted his control over the lucrative trade route between this Black Sea port and central and northern Europe, especially the Polish city of Lvov. Cetatea Albă also yielded signs of God's approval of Alexander's victory over the Tatars, through the discovery of the relics of Saint John the New, martyred by the Tatars in 1330. These were transported to Suceava, the seat of the new metropolitanate, to serve as the principality's protective saint.

This was, however, by no means the last of Alexander's military and economic successes. By 1412 he had also taken control from Wallachia of the other great Genoese emporium, Chilia, situated on the Danube mouth. By securing these two entrepôts, Alexander greatly increased the international political and economic significance of Moldova. The principality now acted as the territorial link, under one sovereignty, between the great north European Baltic and Hanseatic trading ports and the Black Sea, and through this to the Levant, Constantinople and the Mediterranean.

Alexander's military conquests and the political stability of his reign assisted the growth of trade, but Alexander also sought to increase trade in Moldova directly, especially through the granting of privileges to merchants and traders. Hence, he extended the rights of traders to hold market and fairs within the principality. The Genoese traders at Cetatea Albă and Chilia were allowed to retain their administrative autonomy, despite the incorporation of these towns into Moldova, and continued to practise their Catholic faith. In 1408 Alexander extended generous privileges to traders from Lvov in Polish Galicia and to Transylvanian merchants. Suceava, which had existed as an urban outpost well before the foundation of Moldova, and more recently served as the seat of the court and metropolitanate, became one of the principality's main in-land commercial centres. Situated in the north of the principality, Suceava served to connect Moldovan traders with the important trading communities of Lvov and with Bistrița in Transylvania. All three towns had significant and influential German merchant populations.

In order to secure Moldova's new border on the Dnestr river from the Tatars, Alexander extended the fortifications at Hotin and Cetatea Albă. He also improved the defences of Chilia on the Danube, which was vulnerable to Wallachian and Hungarian assault, and in the interior of the country at Neamț and Suceava. The administrative organization of Moldova was also achieved during Alexander's reign through the division of the country into twenty-four regions.

The Moldovan territorial space continued, however, to be contested by other Christian denominations. This was shrewdly exploited by Alexander

to his own political and economic advantage. In 1401 he recognized the establishment of an Armenian Orthodox bishopric based at Suceava. The Armenians were an important trading community throughout the Balkans, the Black Sea region and the Caucasus and the establishment of the bishopric helped to ensure their enduring presence on Moldovan soil. In 1414 he established a Catholic bishopric at Baia, in addition to that established by Lațcu at Siret. This not only placated the regions' 'Catholic powers', Poland-Lithuania and Hungary, but also the significant Catholic German trading community, as well as the Poles and Hungarians who lived in Baia. Alexander also had two Catholic wives, one of whom was Ringala, the cousin of the Polish king.

Perhaps the most interesting of the Christian denominations represented in Moldova during the reign of Alexander and his successors was Hussitism. The Hussites entered the principality as a result of their persecution in Bohemia and Hungary after 1420. Most of these Hussites were artisans and craftsmen, probably of Slovak and Hungarian origin, who found employment in Moldovan towns, although some of them may have come to Moldova as mercenaries. The Hussites did not seek converts amongst the Orthodox population, but were responsible for many conversions from Catholicism to Hussitism, a process which the principality's Orthodox prince cannot have viewed with displeasure. In the 1440s the Englishman Peter Payne, a follower of John Wycliffe who had contacts with the Hussites in Bohemia, took refuge in Moldova before travelling on to Constantinople in 1451 with the intention of establishing a union between the Hussites and the Orthodox church. Such discussions as may have taken place were inevitably brought to an end by the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, after which the Hussites continued their development as a separate sect. A number of them were received at the court of Stephen the Great who, like his grandfather, doubtless approved of their conversions amongst the Roman Catholic population.<sup>42</sup> The Hussite presence in Moldova may be recollected in the name of the town Huși and a village of the same name.<sup>43</sup>

Alexander's reign, therefore, was one of consolidation of royal power and institutions, the promotion of trade and extension of Moldova's borders, within which the principality's religious and cultural life began to flourish. It was the period in which Moldova developed lasting links with the Byzantine world of her Slavonic neighbours and with Constantinople itself. The Byzantine heritage was to remain central to the life of Moldova for centuries to come. Although Dimitrie Cantemir was almost certainly incorrect in his claim that Alexander received his princely crown directly from the Byzantine emperor, Cantemir was, nevertheless, correct in his



description of Alexander as 'the first to make foreigners acquainted with the name of the Moldovans, who up to then had been too little known'.<sup>44</sup>

Despite the successes of Alexander's reign, however, the principality's existence was threatened by a far greater foe than her Catholic neighbours. By 1354, the Muslim Ottomans had already extended their empire to the European shores of the Dardanelles and in subsequent decades their military prowess made them victorious throughout the Balkans and Danube Basin. The Battle of Kosovo in 1389 effectively brought the independence of the Orthodox Serbian kingdom to an end and was followed by the subjugation of the Bulgarian lands to Ottoman control. In 1396 the Christian forces of the Wallachian ruler and the King of Hungary were defeated at Nicopolis on the Danube. The course of the Lower Danube now fell under Turkish control as the Wallachians lost the Danube fortress at Silistra together with the Black Sea coast of the Dobruja. A Turkish siege of Cetatea Albă was successfully repulsed by Alexander the Good in 1420 but subsequent decades witnessed a number of further Christian defeats. In particular, the routing of the Hungarians at the Battle of Varna in 1444 effectively sealed the fate of South-East Europe. On 29 May 1453, the 'Holy City' of Constantinople, the political and religious capital of the East Roman empire for over a millennium, fell to the Ottomans. This was a turning point in the lives of the Orthodox Balkan peoples and the beginning of the region's long domination by a power of alien religion.

Wallachia had already been forced to pay tribute to the Ottomans in the early years of the fifteenth century. In 1462 Mehmed II successfully invaded the principality. He dethroned its prince, Vlad the Impaler, and placed on the throne Vlad's more obliging brother, Radu the Handsome. That Moldova was able to avoid such a fate and retain considerable independence from the Turks for several decades longer than Wallachia, owed much to the military courage and political and diplomatic skill of Stephen the Great (reigned 1457–1504), the grandson of Alexander the Good.

Stephen the Great has the reputation as one of Romania's national heroes, but his path to the throne was anything but auspicious. Immediately upon Alexander's death in 1432, civil war broke out between his numerous descendents. Neither of the principalities had a clear system of royal succession to the throne, and utilized a mixture of the hereditary and elective principles. This meant that all male members of the princely family, including illegitimate sons, had the right to claim the throne and to place themselves before the boyars who chose the new ruler from amongst them. Unsurprisingly, this created intense rivalry between the

different contenders and their boyar supporters which frequently lapsed into full-scale war. The flawed system of succession ultimately strengthened the hands of the Ottoman sultans in their attempts to exert control over the rulers of the principalities.

The civil war on Alexander's death raged for twenty-five years and the period up to Stephen's accession in 1457 saw no less than sixteen reigns divided between eight princes. In order to win the throne, Stephen entered into an alliance with his Wallachian cousin, Vlad the Impaler, and was forced, as the price of his support, to cede the port of Chilia to the Wallachians and their Hungarian suzerains.<sup>45</sup>

In exchange for Polish support in his battle to win the throne, Stephen was also forced to cede the fortress of Hotin on the Dnestr river. The consequence of the loss of Chilia and Hotin was that Moldova lost much of the autonomy, built up during Alexander's reign, to her powerful Roman Catholic neighbours. These now controlled the Danube and Dnestr rivers, and the trade which traversed them. Moreover, only one year before Stephen ascended the Moldovan throne, his predecessor and rival, Petru Aron, had been forced to pay tribute to the Ottoman Turks, thereby accepting their suzerainty: an ominous sign of the growth of Turkish power.

Once installed on the throne, however, Stephen was determined to free himself from dependence upon Hungary, Poland and the Turks by entering into alliances with these powers and playing them off, one against the other. In so doing, Stephen was able to turn Moldova into a regional political and military force of no mean significance. As the historian Șerban Papacostea notes, 'ceasing simply to be an object of Polish-Hungarian rivalry, Moldova became an active factor in European politics'.<sup>46</sup>

Stephen's immediate concern was the return of the fortresses and ports of Hotin and Chilia. His two-year siege of Hotin led to a treaty with the Poles in 1459 under which Stephen swore fealty to the Polish king, who in turn restored Hotin to Moldova. Supported now by the Poles, Stephen was successful in his reconquest of Chilia from the Hungarians in 1465. Loss of control over the Danube mouth was a significant economic and strategic blow to the Hungarians, however, and led their king, Matthias Corvinus, to launch an invasion of Moldova. Stephen's defeat of the Hungarians at Baia in 1467 proved to be the last major attempt by the Hungarians to bring Moldova under direct Hungarian control and gave Stephen freedom of action to deal with the Poles and Turks.

The latter, in the meantime, had formed an alliance with the Muslim Tatars, brooding discontentedly east of the Dnestr river, whence they had



been driven by Alexander the Good. Stephen had already successfully beaten back a Tatar incursion across the Dnestr at the Battle of Lipnic in 1469 and had built two fortresses on the river, at Orhei and Soroca, to contain them. Six years later, Stephen's army was once more victorious over a combined Turkish-Tartar army at the Battle of Podul Înalt and repulsed Turkish naval attacks on Chilia and Cetatea Albă. These victories over the seemingly invincible Sultan Mehmed II, 'the Conqueror' of Constantinople, led the pope to declare Stephen to be the 'Athlete of Christ', which was a name reserved only for other such notable heroes as John Hunyadi and the Albanian Skanderbeg.

Undaunted, the Turks once again attacked Moldova in 1476 and defeated Stephen at the Battle of Valea Albă. Stephen's position remained sufficiently strong, however, for the Turkish forces to withdraw from the country without making any territorial gains. A treaty between Stephen and Mehmed stabilized relations but forced the Moldovan ruler to pay tribute to the sultan, like his predecessor Petru Aron.

Following Mehmed's death, his successor, Bayezid II, proved determined to retake Chilia and Cetatea Albă. In the summer of 1484, the Turks captured the fortresses and reinforced Stephen's status as a tribute-paying vassal of the Sublime Porte. A treaty of 1487, however, while confirming Turkish possession of the two ports, stipulated that the Ottomans were not to expand beyond them. Moldova's autonomy was recognized, including the continuance of Moldovan customs, religion, and law, together with the right of the boyars to choose their own prince. These conditions were subject, however, to the princes' regular payment of tribute and the requirement to give military aid, if requested, to the sultan.

The loss of Chilia and Cetatea Albă, the latter now known as Akkerman to the Turks, was a huge blow to the Moldovan ruler, and not simply on economic grounds. The fortresses were now garrisoned by Turkish troops, thereby potentially curtailing Stephen's military freedom of action and enabling the sultan to interfere in the affairs of Moldova and lands further afield. As Bayezid II himself commented, Chilia was 'the key and gateway to the whole country of Moldova and all the lands of Hungary and of the Danubian countries', while Cetatea Albă was 'the key and gateway to all the Polish lands, the Romanian lands and Tatar lands and to all the Black Sea . . .'.<sup>47</sup>

In an attempt to recapture these strategically and economically important possessions, Stephen was forced to turn once again to the Poles. Reluctantly Stephen swore fealty to the Polish king in 1485 in exchange for military assistance. The Poles, however, made peace with the Turks and thereby earned themselves Stephen's enmity. With relations between

Moldova and Poland-Lithuania at complete breakdown, Stephen sought support against the Poles in a number of unlikely quarters. He concluded an alliance with the Tatar Khan of the Crimea, and was even prepared at times to consort with the Turks against the Poles. He also exerted considerable diplomatic pressure in pursuit of close relations with Ivan III, prince of Muscovy (reigned 1462–1505), who was seeking to expand his territory at the expense of his Catholic Polish-Lithuanian neighbour.<sup>48</sup>

Closer contact with Muscovy was secured through family links, since Stephen's first wife, Eudoxia, sister of the Kievan prince, was also Ivan III's cousin.<sup>49</sup> Stephen's rapprochement with Muscovy was sealed by the marriage of his daughter by Eudoxia to Ivan's son in 1483. Diplomatic activity between the Moldovan and Russian courts was intense in the late 1480s and early 1490s, and it is possible that a treaty of alliance may have been concluded.

In 1492 Stephen moved against the Poles by invading and occupying Pocuția, a region in the south-east of Polish Galicia. Pocuția had been promised to Stephen's ancestor, Petru Mușat, I in 1387 as surety for a large loan which the Moldovan prince had lent to his suzerain, Wladislas Jagiello, to help him prosecute his war against Hungary. The loan had never been repaid, but the Moldovans had, thus far, not pursued their right to Pocuția. Since it was watered by the upper reaches of both the Dnestr and Prut rivers, the area was rich in agricultural produce, as well as having plentiful mineral resources. In 1497, the Poles struck back with a full-scale invasion of Moldova. Once again, however, Stephen's military skill proved superior to that of his adversaries, leading to victory over the Poles at the Battle of Dumbrava Roșie. Thus, while the Polish-Moldovan treaty of 1499 stipulated the return of recently seized Pocuția to Poland, it also brought Polish suzerainty over Moldova to an end.<sup>50</sup> In the final years of his reign, Stephen sought friendship with his Catholic neighbours, Poland-Lithuania and Hungary, with a view to expelling the Turks from the region. As a result, Stephen tried to influence the ruler of Muscovy to end his conflict with Poland-Lithuania and to unite with his fellow Christians against the Ottomans.

The fall of the 'Holy City' of Constantinople to the Muslims Ottomans only four years before Stephen became prince of Moldova in 1457 was a crucial factor in shaping the prince's mentality and that of his successors. After 1453 the princes of Moldova and Wallachia were the sole surviving Orthodox monarchs in south-eastern Europe. They increasingly regarded themselves, and were regarded by the Orthodox peoples under Ottoman rule, as the last bastion of Orthodox Christianity in the region, from where a 'crusade' against the infidel might be launched, and as the protectors



and patrons of the Orthodox church under alien rule. The Moldovan and Wallachian princes thus saw themselves as the legitimate inheritors of the Byzantine imperial tradition. In keeping with such a view, the ceremonial at Stephen's court was replete with Byzantine ritual. His investiture as prince in 1457 included his anointment by the Orthodox metropolitan. This mirrored the former emperors' anointment by the patriarchs of Constantinople and served to endow the Moldovan house of Muşat with an almost sacred aura.<sup>51</sup>

Stephen's three marriages to Orthodox princesses were an integral part of his vision of Moldova as the defender of the Orthodox world. The prince's marriage to Eudoxia of Kiev and the pursuit of closer family connections with Ivan III of Muscovy were intended to seal Moldova's position as the mediator between the world of the Orthodox Christians of the Balkans and that of the Orthodox East Slavs. Stephen's subsequent marriage in 1472 to Maria of Mangup, a member of the former Byzantine imperial family, was also pursued in order to raise the prestige of Moldova in the Orthodox world and to link the house of Muşat directly with the imperial heritage. Through this marriage, Stephen acquired territory in the Crimea region of the Black Sea. His third marriage, to the daughter of the Wallachian prince Radu the Handsome, was inspired in the hope, which was not fulfilled, of uniting the thrones of Moldova and Wallachia and thereby launching an anti-Ottoman crusade from the principalities.

Stephen's role as patron and protector of the Orthodox church was apparent in the blossoming of Moldova's religious life during his long reign. The prince was assisted in this by the many Orthodox Christians, especially Greeks, Serbs and Bulgarians, who fled from Constantinople after its fall, and from other areas of the Byzantine empire which the Turks had conquered.<sup>52</sup> Stephen was also responsible for founding, or restoring, some forty churches and monasteries in Moldova. These included additions to the religious foundations of his predecessors, for example at Neamţ and Bistriţa monasteries. Amongst Stephen's own foundations were the monastery of Putna, which quickly emerged as one of Moldova's foremost centres of monasticism and scholarship, as well as Voroneţ, Dobrovăţ and Tazlău. Amongst the prince's new churches was one dedicated to the Apostles Peter and Paul in Huşi in the 1490s, which was transformed into the seat of the new bishopric of Huşi in the following century. Wealthy boyars at the princely court were also generous towards the church. Of particular cultural importance was Arbore monastery, founded by Stephen's chief magistrate.

The style of ecclesiastical architecture and painting employed during this period combined the Byzantine style inherited from the era of

Alexander the Good, with local traditions such as Gothic elements introduced by Transylvanian and Polish artists and artisans attracted to Moldova by the prince. Stephen and his boyars further supported the growing monastic establishment through financial donations and gifts of land, which included whole villages, as well as forests, vineyards, mills, beehives and fishponds. As a result, the monasteries soon ranked amongst the principality's foremost landowners.

The workshops attached to Moldova's monasteries were prolific in the creation of precious religious artefacts, such as icons, embroidery, vestments and ritual objects. Many of the silversmiths and goldsmiths as well as the artists of the elaborately decorated frescoes and murals which adorned Moldovan church walls were trained in the Moldovan monasteries, while others came from remoter areas of the former 'Byzantine commonwealth'. Richly decorated liturgical books were produced at the new scriptorium at Putna monastery and at Neamț, where the school of calligraphy and manuscript illumination founded by Alexander the Good continued to flourish.

Many of Moldova's artistic treasures, however, were destined for Orthodox religious houses and institutions beyond the principality. The prince, together with wealthy boyars and metropolitans, began to give support to the Orthodox church throughout the Ottoman empire. Their munificence consisted of financial donations, often used for the restoration or construction of ecclesiastical buildings, and in gifts or precious liturgical or religious objects. From the mid-fifteenth century, and for several centuries thereafter, the principalities supported the church throughout the Balkans, as well as the patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. Support for the patriarchy of Jerusalem included donations to the 'Holy Places' associated with the life and death of Christ. The relationship between the principalities and the monasteries of Mount Athos, the great centre of Orthodox spirituality, was especially warm. Stephen's gifts to the 'holy mountain' of Athos began in 1466 with a donation of money to Zographou monastery and, in subsequent decades, his gifts included an illuminated Slavonic edition of the Gospels, precious embroideries and a gold icon of St George. He was also responsible for the building of a tower at Vatopediou monastery, as well as a baptistery at St Paul's monastery, both on Mount Athos.<sup>53</sup>

Stephen's growing reputation for generosity within the Orthodox Christian world, and his considerable military successes, would not have been possible without the internal consolidation of his royal authority. His anointment by the Moldovan metropolitan during his investiture as prince in 1457 was not only a means of legitimizing his accession to the throne



after twenty-five years of civil war, but also of establishing himself as the inheritor of the Byzantine concepts of rulership. Although often at odds with political and military reality, Stephen, in the best traditions of Byzantine autocracy, believed that the ruler's authority was derived directly from God, as part of His divine plan, as well as through royal descent. His reassertion of royal power over the boyars was in keeping with these principles.

Mindful of how the power of the landed boyars had enabled them to contest the royal succession and drag the country into civil war, Stephen sought to diminish their strength through the restitution of royal lands which the boyars had expropriated during the wars, and by preventing any further expansion of boyar estates. He reasserted royal domination over the *Sfatul Domnesc*, the princely council, and over the army. He expanded the latter to an impressive force of some forty to sixty thousand men, while reducing the authority of the boyars over the contingents which they sent to war.<sup>54</sup>

The concept of divine order, and the legitimacy of Stephen's rulership through royal descent, were given expression in the first chronicle of Moldovan history, which was produced at Stephen's court during his lifetime. Up until this period, literary works in Old Church Slavonic had been almost entirely copies of Slavonic texts or translations from Byzantine-Greek. Few creative works were produced, with the notable exception of Grigore Țamblac's 'Life of St John the New'. The chronicle written during Stephen's reign provided the framework for the oldest surviving Moldovan chronicle in Old Church Slavonic, the sixteenth-century 'Anonymous Chronicle of Moldova', which covers the history of the principality from its foundation by Dragoș to 1507, three years after Stephen's death. This chronicle subsequently provided the source for the seventeenth-century Moldovan chroniclers, Grigore Ureche and Miron and Nicolae Costin, who produced the first historical chronicles in the Romanian language. The political importance of the sixteenth-century 'Anonymous Chronicle of Moldova' lies in its stress both on divine order and on dynastic continuity in legitimizing Stephen's rule, and integrates the major events in Stephen's reign into Moldova's history from the principality's foundation by Dragoș.<sup>55</sup> This sense of dynastic continuity and the unfolding of Moldovan history around its rulers was given expression by Stephen's removal of the wooden church erected by Dragoș at Volovăț to his own monastic foundation at Putna, where it became the Mușat family necropolis.

Stephen's reign was both Moldova's 'Golden Age', in which the political and cultural achievements of Alexander's reign were brought to



fruition, as well as its swansong. Moldova under Stephen the Great appeared poised to establish its independence from foreign suzerainty and to achieve the status of a regional power of military, political and cultural significance. Yet even at the height of Stephen's power the signs of impending Ottoman domination were already evident. The reigns of his successors bore witness to the principality's diminishing freedom of action in the political and economic sphere as Turkish influence in the region grew.

### *The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: Moldova under Ottoman Suzerainty*

Ottoman gains on the Black Sea shore in the late fifteenth century had already transformed the Black Sea into a 'Turkish lake'. The fate of Christendom took a further turn for the worse when, at the Battle of Mohács in 1526, the Hungarian king was defeated by the Ottomans. Fifteen years later, central Hungary was transformed into a Turkish *pashalik*, a province under direct Turkish control headed by a pasha. Transylvania was also forced to accept vassal status similar to that of Moldova and Wallachia.

Nevertheless, the principalities retained considerable autonomy within the Ottoman Empire. Under agreements (or *ahdnames*, later misleadingly known as 'capitulations')<sup>56</sup> between the sultans and the principalities, the princes became vassals of the sultan, who retained control of their foreign policy, and they paid him an annual tribute, together with various other contributions in money and kind. In exchange, the sultan was obliged not to interfere in the internal affairs of the principalities and agreed not to settle Muslims, build mosques or garrison Ottoman troops on Wallachian or Moldovan soil. In reality, however, the Ottomans were soon encroaching on the autonomy of the principalities.

A number of ports and fortresses belonging to both Moldova and Wallachia on the Danube and Dnestr rivers were occupied by the Turks. As early as 1419 the ports of Giurgiu and Turnu on the Danube had each been transformed into a *raia*; a territory occupied and administered by the Turks, usually around a fortress. Following their loss under Stephen the Great, Chilia and Cetatea Albă also became *raia-s* (for such the plural, which has no counterpart in English, will in future be rendered). In 1538, during the reign of Stephen's illegitimate son, Petru Rareș, Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent seized Tighina on the Dnestr, which became the core of the Bender *raia*.<sup>57</sup> Over the following century, the same fate befell

the Danube ports of Brailă, Ismail and Reni. In 1714 the massive fortress of Hotin on the Upper Dnestr became a *raia*, occupied by a Turkish garrison, to prevent it falling permanently into the hands of the Poles. The Turks and their followers increasingly acquired land in and around each *raia* and established a number of mosques. When Prince Vasile Lupu entered Chilia and Ismail during the 1630s, he discovered to his horror that neither port had a single church, although both had mosques.

The purpose of the *raia-s* was to secure the northern border of the Ottoman empire against Christian attacks, and to ensure the continued loyalty of the sultans' Moldovan and Wallachian vassals. The *raia-s* also acted as collection points for tribute and agricultural produce from the principalities destined for delivery to Constantinople. The fortresses and land incorporated into each *raia* were not returned to the principalities until the early nineteenth century, despite the many attempts by the princes of Moldova to recapture them with the help of their Christian neighbours.

The *raia-s* of Bender (Rom. Tighina) and Akkerman (Rom. Cetatea Albă) on the Dnestr river served as a channel of communication between the Turks and their Muslim Tatars allies who lived beyond the Dnestr.<sup>58</sup> The Ottomans had already settled Tatar families in the Dobruja on the Black Sea in the early sixteenth century and had offered them land in the area around the *raia-s* of Chilia and Akkerman. From the mid-sixteenth century, Tatars began to settle in the triangle of land running roughly from the south of Bender on the Dnestr in south-east Moldova, across to Chilia on the Danube mouth. This area was known as *Budjak* to the Tatars and Turks (*Bugeac*, or *Bugiac*, in Romanian) meaning 'corner' or 'nook' in Tatar. By the early seventeenth century some 15,000 Tatars had been settled in the Bugeac and the name began to be used in official documentation. At the same time, as a reward for the Tatars' frequent military help against rebellious Moldovans, Poles and Cossacks, the Ottomans created the massive Tatar-controlled *pashalik* of Silistria which included the Danube ports of Turnu, Giurgiu, Brailă, and Chilia, as well as Akkerman and Bender on the Dnestr, together with the Bugeac and the Dobruja. A substantial area of the principality was thus dominated by the Muslim Tatars and proved a permanent source of conflict as Moldovan rulers and boyars frequently sought to expel them, often with the assistance of neighbouring powers.

The Ottomans did not only encroach upon the territorial integrity of the principalities. In the sixteenth century, the sultan also became responsible for confirming the appointment of each new ruler and increasingly interfered in the process of their election by the boyars. No ruler in either



Moldova or Wallachia could remain long on the throne without the approval of the sultan. Meanwhile, the boyars tried to elect weak princes through whom they could exert control. Stephen the Great's attempt to ensure that the Moldovan throne remained the preserve of the house of Muşat proved abortive. Never again was the principality to have a prince who ruled as long as either Alexander the Good or Stephen the Great.

The last representative of the Muşat line to rule in Moldova was Ştefan Răzvan whose reign barely lasted five months in 1595. Even before this, the Muşat hold on the throne had become insecure as it increasingly became 'a plaything between the boyars, the Turks and foreign adventurers'.<sup>59</sup> The latter included men of Albanian, Armenian, and Greek origin, eager to become one of only two Orthodox Christian ruler within the sphere of the Ottoman Empire. Aspiring candidates and their boyar supporters were not above colluding with neighbouring Christian powers, or even the Turks, or the otherwise much-loathed Tatars, to secure the throne. Increasingly 'the thrones of the principalities were obtained through money, treachery, cunning and murder'.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to bearing the costs of the annual tribute, from the mid-sixteenth century the princes also had to pay a heavy 'fee' to the sultan as the price of their appointment. Both these payments rose quickly. The tribute paid by Stephen the Great in 1487, for example, had been some 4,000 gold pieces. This had risen to 65,000 gold pieces by the 1560s and stood at a staggering 260,000 gold pieces by the seventeenth century, in addition to the appointment fee.<sup>61</sup> The prince also had other obligations to the sultan such as providing financial assistance for Ottoman military campaigns as well as military service itself. He was forced to provide labourers for certain tasks, such as the repair of the Danube and Dnestr fortresses, as well as frequent and sumptuous 'gifts' for the sultan and his family and for Ottoman officials.

With such lucrative rewards on offer, it is hardly surprising that the sultans encouraged a rapid turnover of rulers. Between Petru Rareş' second reign from 1541–1546 and the exceptionally long reign, by Moldovan standards, of Vasile Lupu from 1634 to 1653, there were some forty-five reigns in Moldova. Few princes survived as long as a decade, while many reigned for only months, or even weeks. Not a few were appointed, unseated and reappointed several times according to prevailing political and military winds.

Despite the high costs, and personal risk, that attached to it, however, the throne remained much sought after. For a start, there was the considerable prestige of the prince's unique relationship with the Orthodox



church, a point to which we shall return. Moreover, 'if the prince was capable and had secured the favour of the sultan and his advisers, he could conduct himself as an absolute ruler at home', since there were few constitutional restraints upon him.<sup>62</sup> Although the prince ruled with his council, increasingly known as the 'divan' in the Ottoman period, this could easily be packed with his family or loyal retainers. In any case the divan had no legal means of restraining the prince, leaving only the option of rebellion, recourse to which the boyars frequently took.

The new incumbent on the throne could, moreover, easily recoup his financial losses, and hopefully make a handsome profit, through the sale of state offices, the holders of which then sold on subordinate offices, and a crippling system of 'tax-farming', which again profited the prince and many of the boyars. As evidence for the proliferation of taxes, it has been estimated that by the seventeenth century a single piece of land in Moldova could be subject to as many as seventy different imposts.<sup>63</sup> The prince also profited through being awarded monopolies on certain agricultural goods by the sultan.

Unfortunately, however, the Turks reserved for themselves a monopoly over a large share of Moldova's plentiful agricultural produce, which consisted of grain, butter, honey, wax, salt, wine, sheep, cattle and horses. Much of this, but especially sheep, cattle and grain, could only be exported to Constantinople where it fed the city's rapidly expanding population. It was the prince's duty to purchase, collect and ship these products for the Turks at the lowest possible prices. The *raia*-s on the Danube and Dnestr rivers were important for the enforcement of these procedures. To ensure the princes' loyalty to the sultans and the complete fulfilment of his obligation to provision Constantinople, as well as his other financial and military obligations, a Janissary guard of 500 men was assigned to the princely court.

While many rulers, boyars, officials and merchants profited financially from the effects of Ottoman suzerainty, other sectors of society were drained of their wealth. The taxation system ultimately fell upon the peasantry since both the higher boyars and the church benefited from many exemptions. The ingenious device of charging tax on communities rather than individuals was designed to prevent peasants from fleeing in the face of their obligations. Other sectors of society clearly did not always benefit from the economic effects of Ottoman suzerainty either. Notwithstanding the fact that Iași was the seat both of the princely court and the metropolitanate from the 1560s, the number of houses in the capital fell from 12,000 to 4,000 over the course of the seventeenth century.<sup>64</sup> There was little incentive, however, for a prince to reform the

system. Any prince who tried to ease the financial position of his subjects was able to raise less money in taxation to pay for the costs of the throne. Any rival candidate would thus be in a position to offer the sultan more money and have the prince ejected from the throne.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, given the Turkish breaches of Moldovan autonomy, the princes were not above breaking their side of the agreements with the Ottomans. In particular, the princes regularly entered into relations with foreign powers, a privilege reserved in theory for the sultan. Petru Rareș' first reign, which began in 1527, was brought to an end by Suleiman the Magnificent's invasion of Moldova in 1538 which had resulted from the prince's machinations with the Habsburg king (later Emperor) Ferdinand. Rareș was dethroned and Suleiman seized Tighina, which was renamed Bender, and transformed into a *raia*. Petru Rareș was reinstated as prince in 1541, together with a Janissary guard for his 'protection'.

Although they could only be sustained on the throne with Turkish approval, many of Petru Rareș' successors were brought to power with the aid of the Polish-Lithuanian kings. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw a continuation of Polish-Lithuanian political influence in Moldova, despite the independence from this power achieved under Stephen the Great. Alexandru Lapușneanu, for example, reigned from 1552 to 1561 and again from 1564 to 1568 and was on both occasions brought to power with the military help of the Poles. This did not prevent him, however, from being chronically subservient to the Turks. He paid the sultan his tribute regularly and made no attempt to try to regain Moldova's lost fortresses, as the boyars urged him to do. He even burned Moldova's surviving fortresses, saving only Hotin, so that they could not pose a threat to the Ottomans. Furthermore, at the request of the Porte, Lăpușneanu moved the princely court and seat of the Moldovan metropolitanate from Suceava to Iași so that both institutions would be removed from Polish influence and nearer to the Turkish-controlled *raia*-s.<sup>65</sup>

Some rulers even continued to swear fealty to the Polish-Lithuanian monarchs, as well as to the sultan, in an attempt to 'balance' one power against the other and thus retain freedom of action. The last ruler of the royal house of Mușat, Ștefan Răzvan, was replaced by Ieremia, a representative of the powerful Movilă boyar family, with Polish help in 1595. Movilă subsequently recognized the Polish-Lithuanian king as his overlord.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Moldovans also developed contacts with the Zaporozhian Cossacks who lived in the region of the Dnieper river in the Ukrainian borderlands of Poland-



Lithuania. Alexandru Cornea who ruled Moldova from 1540 to 1541 sought to retake Bender and Akkerman with Cossack assistance in the first joint 'anti-Ottoman' venture of the Moldovans and Cossacks. In the 1560s the Cossacks even laid claim to the Moldovan throne since the hetman was distantly related to the Muşat royal line.<sup>66</sup> A prince of Armenian origin, John the Brave, (or alternatively 'the Terrible', owing to his attempt to force the boyars and the church to pay tax ), who ruled from 1572 to 1574, refused to pay tribute to the sultan. Aided by the Cossacks, he attacked the Turkish *raia-s* of Brailă in Wallachia, and Bender and Akkerman on the River Dnestr, and invaded the Bugeac, with a view to expelling both the Turks and Tatars. The prince and his Cossack allies, however, were defeated by the Ottomans at the Battle of Cahul in June 1574. John was taken prisoner by the Ottomans and subsequently executed: a not uncommon fate for recalcitrant princes. Such close relations, however, did not prevent the Cossacks from sometimes entering the principality as enemies and plundering its towns. Even Vasile Lupu, Moldova's defender of the Orthodox faith in the mid-seventeenth century, suffered humiliation at the hands of the Cossacks. His refusal to allow the marriage of his daughter to the son of the Cossack hetman, Bogdan Khmelnitsky, led the Cossacks to sack Iaşi in 1650. Thus chastened, Lupu was forced to submit to Khmelnitsky's request.

Michael the Brave's brief union of Wallachia, Moldova and Transylvania was also achieved with some Cossack support, since it was they who assisted him in his invasion of Transylvania in 1599.<sup>67</sup> Michael had become prince of Wallachia in 1593 where he consolidated his power sufficiently to enable him to defeat Ottoman forces on the River Danube in 1595 at the Battles of Călugăreni and Giurgiu. Four years later he invaded Transylvania and was elected prince. In the spring of the following year, he entered Moldova and unseated the Polish-backed Ieremia Movilă. Thus, for a few months the three principalities were governed by a single ruler. A rebellion by the Transylvanian nobles and a Polish invasion of Moldova and Wallachia, however, brought this brief unity to an end. Movilă was reinstated by the Poles as ruler of Moldova in 1600 and Michael the Brave was murdered by a malcontent. Though his reign over the three Romanian-speaking principalities was meteorically short, Michael the Brave is, nevertheless, regarded by many Romanian historians as one of the forerunners of the movement for Romanian national unity.

Despite the short duration of most princely reigns, and the violent end which awaited many princes, the thrones of Moldova and Wallachia retained high prestige. As the only Orthodox rulers under Ottoman

suzerainty, and indeed the only Orthodox rulers in Europe other than the prince of Muscovy, the Moldovan and Wallachian princes were regarded as the legitimate followers of the former Byzantine emperors whose duty it had been to protect and sustain the Orthodox church. It is possible that already by the late sixteenth century the princes were being invested in Constantinople by the patriarch, prior to their investiture in their princely capitals by their respective metropolitans. Such ceremonies were symbolic of the intimate bond between ruler and church, and emphasized the nature of the ruler's office as 'God-given'.<sup>68</sup>

The sixteenth-century princes continued to act as generous benefactors to the Orthodox church both in the principality and beyond. Petru Rareș (reigned 1527–1538 and 1541–1546), despite the considerable loss of Moldovan autonomy to the Turks during his reigns, was responsible for completing a number of monasteries established by his predecessors, such as Moldovița, where he also built the church, and Căpriană, east of the River Prut. Both of these houses had been originally founded by Alexander the Good. Petru Rareș himself established monasteries at Probota and Râșca. Alexandru Lăpușneanu, despite his supine attitude towards the Turks, was also a generous benefactor of the church. He founded the monastery of Slatina and built a number of churches, including that at Bistrița monastery, as well as a church in Lvov in Polish Galicia. Wealthy boyars also played their part in supporting the Orthodox church. The monastery of Humor was founded by one of Petru Rareș' courtiers while Sucevița monastery was built through the generosity of the powerful Movilă family in the late sixteenth century.

A characteristic of a number of Moldovan parish and monastic churches was the practice of painting the whole surface of the exterior walls. Notable examples are at Stephen the Great's church in Suceava painted in the 1520s, the churches at the monasteries of Moldovița, Voroneț, Arbore and Humor painted in the 1530s and 1540s, and the church at Sucevița monastery which was decorated in the later sixteenth century. The paintings include depictions of a typically religious nature, such as angels, saints, martyrs, apostles and prophets, as well as biblical scenes of the Last Judgement. More unusually, there are also scenes of a more profane nature such as an artist's impression of the siege of Constantinople by the Persians in the early seventh century, a depiction of a group of classical philosophers, and portraits of a contemporary sixteenth-century metropolitan and a renowned hermit. The highly unusual nature of these exterior painting, together with other local influences, have led some historians to argue for the existence of a distinct 'Moldovan style' of ecclesiastical art and architecture between the



fourteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>69</sup> We should, however, note Dimitri Obolensky's comment that local variations in ecclesiastical art and architecture were less significant than 'the common pattern of values, beliefs and intellectual and aesthetic experiences which in the course of the Middle Ages, the Bulgarians, Russians, Serbians and Rumanians acquired from Byzantium'.<sup>70</sup>

Moldovan, and Wallachian, rulers from the sixteenth century onwards were in no danger of neglecting their duty, as heirs to the Byzantine emperors, towards the Orthodox 'commonwealth' beyond the borders of the principality. Direct contact between the principalities and the patriarch of Constantinople was made in the early sixteenth century. Many patriarchs visited the principalities personally, including Patriarch Pachomios in 1513, asking for succour for the Orthodox church in Ottoman 'captivity'. The Moldovan prince Petru Șchiopul (reigned 1574–1577, 1578–1579 and 1582–1591) gave the patriarch a house in Constantinople and, for some years in the sixteenth century, the patriarch resided in a Wallachian monastery in Constantinople. The century also saw considerable support from the principalities for the patriarchates of Jerusalem and Antioch, based in Damascus, particularly by Alexandru Lăpușneanu and Petru Șchiopul. The latter even sent monks from Iași to build a church in Jerusalem, which prompted the patriarch to pay a visit to Șchiopul's court in Moldova. The patriarch of Antioch also visited both the principalities during the last of Petru Șchiopul's three reigns.

The princes were also generous in their support for the Orthodox church throughout the Balkans, giving both money and precious gifts. The monasteries on Mount Athos, in particular, were almost entirely dependent upon the principalities for funding during the sixteenth century, and Petru Rareș and Alexandru Lăpușneanu and his wife were notable donors. The Moldovan rulers also supported the monasteries on Mount Sinai, in Serbia and Macedonia, as well as in the lands of present day Greece and Bulgaria.<sup>71</sup>

One sixteenth-century prince, however, proved to be a notable exception to these stalwarts of Orthodoxy. Prince Ioan Iacob Heraclid, otherwise known as Despot Vodă, who reigned from 1561 to 1563, was a most unlikely cultural synthesis: a Greek Protestant. Following the prince's investiture the Moldovan boyars, doubtless pleased with their selection of a prince they believed would be pliable, indulged in two days of drunken revelry. The prince soon revealed his true colours, however, and attempted to introduce protestantism into the principality with the aid of the many contacts he had amongst protestants in Germany,

Denmark and Poland. He appointed a Polish Protestant as bishop and opened a protestant school at Cotnari. He even attempted to sequester the land and wealth of the monasteries and was duly murdered by the now suitably sober Orthodox boyars.<sup>72</sup>

During the seventeenth century protestantism, this time in its Calvinist guise, was to reappear, as we shall see below, but the seventeenth century as a whole represented the high point of Moldova's relations with the rest of the Orthodox religious world. There was a flood of new monastic foundations paid for by rulers and their wives, as well as by wealthy metropolitans and boyars. Many princes had direct contact with the various patriarchs, either through correspondence or personal visits by the patriarchs to Moldova. There were also increasing contacts with the Georgian Orthodox church and with the Russian Orthodox world.

The vigour of the Orthodox church in seventeenth-century Moldova, and its centrality to the Orthodox religious world as a whole, is especially associated with the reign of Vasile Lupu, who reigned continuously for nineteen years from 1634 to 1653. Lupu, whose original name was Lupu Coci, had been an official at the Moldovan court, and was of Albanian and Moldovan descent, but Greek-educated. He changed his name to Vasile, the Romanian form of Basil, on becoming prince in honour of the ninth-century Byzantine emperor Basil I. This expressed his desire to reign over Moldova with a 'Byzantine-style' absolutism and to promote and protect the Orthodox church at home and abroad in the manner of the former emperors of Constantinople. Lupu succeeded in centralizing power and in controlling the political life of Moldova either through his representatives, usually his relatives, or directly. He revitalized the use of Byzantine ritual in the daily life of the Moldovan court, which included the donning of elaborate Byzantine ceremonial costume. Thus, Lupu was seen to have, quite literally, inherited the mantle of the former emperors.<sup>73</sup>

Lupu was responsible for erecting over twenty religious establishments in Moldova and one in Wallachia, the Stelea church in Târgoviște built in the 1640s. The architecture of these buildings reflected the local Byzantine style, inherited from previous centuries, with newer cultural influences from Poland, Transylvania, Russia and the Orient.<sup>74</sup> His foundations included churches throughout Moldova, including two in Suceava, restoration of the Golia monastery in Iași, and the creation of two new monasteries, one at Hlincea, near Iași and the Trei Ierarhi monastery, also in Iași, now well established as the Moldovan princely and religious capital. Trei Ierarhi, in addition to the Byzantine style, shows the influences of both the Middle East and Russia. While the external walls are covered in stone-carved patterns of Armenian, Georgian, Turkish, Arabic



and Persian design, the paintings on the inside of the church were executed by artists from Moscow.

Lupu donated money and land, which sometimes included within it whole villages, for the use of monasteries in Moldova. His munificence towards the rest of the Orthodox 'commonwealth' soon became legendary, a testament not only to Lupu's generosity but also to how much wealth a shrewd Moldovan ruler could accumulate. Monks, clergymen, artists and craftsmen from all over the Orthodox Christian world were made welcome by Lupu at his court in Iași and received gifts of money or precious religious treasures. In addition, he granted commercial privileges to Serb and Croatian monasteries, as well as founding the monastery of St Lavră at Morea in the Peloponnese. Such was Lupu's close involvement in the politics of the patriarchy in Constantinople that he even paid off the patriarch's debts in 1638. It was, therefore, no simple flattery when the patriarch described the prince as 'the living successor to the emperors who formerly reigned in Byzantium'.<sup>75</sup>

Lupu did not forget the larger Orthodox community and was generous in his support of Orthodox populations in Poland-Lithuania, now under increasing pressure from the forces of the Catholic Counter-Reformation and the Uniate movement. He supported the Lvov Dormition Brotherhood, originally established to promote Orthodoxy in the fifteenth century by merchants in Lvov, a city which had long-standing trading links with Moldova. Lupu himself founded the church of St Paraschiva in Lvov in 1644, as well as giving donations to the Orthodox church in Kiev.

The practice of 'dedicating' monasteries within the principalities to sister-houses or Orthodox institutions elsewhere in the Ottoman empire, which began as early as the fourteenth century, increased considerably during the seventeenth century. Practically, this meant that a Moldovan monastery would be placed under the jurisdiction of the house or institution to which it was dedicated, together with all its land, property and revenues.<sup>76</sup> The Golia monastery in Iași, for instance, was dedicated to Mount Athos in the early years of the seventeenth century during the rule of the Movilă family. One of Vasile Lupu's other predecessors, Radu Mihnea, dedicated the Galata monastery in Iași to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in 1618 and the Aron Vodă monastery, also in Iași, to the Antioch patriarchy in 1625. Lupu himself dedicated Stephen the Great's monastic foundation of Dobrovaț to Zographou monastery on Mount Athos. Subsequent princes were no less generous. The wife of Gheorghe Ștefan, Lupu's successor, dedicated Alexander the Good's important foundation at Bistrița to the patriarchy of Jerusalem. Dosoftei, metropolitan of Moldova from 1671 to 1686, dedicated Petru Rareș'

monastery of Probota to the patriarchy of Jerusalem in the 1670s and the great Căpriană monastery, east of the River Prut, was dedicated to Zographou monastery on Mount Athos by Antioch Cantemir in the 1690s. Increasingly, these so-called dedicated monasteries were also run by monks or clergymen, usually Greeks, who came to Moldova from the institution to which the Moldovan house had been dedicated. By the time the monasteries were secularized in the 1860s, the dedicated monasteries and their 'foreign monks' were found to be in possession of one-fifth of the total land surface of both the principalities.<sup>77</sup>

The expansion of the monasteries in the seventeenth century meant that the monastic population was considerable, although the building and restoration of churches and monasteries was partly due to the great destruction and plundering of religious houses which took place during the frequent wars and other upheavals. The monasteries were important not only for their central role as religious institutions and workshops which produced religious artefacts and books and as centres of scholarship, but also as landowners, producing agricultural produce, providers of education, and as institutions which cared for the sick. The centrality of religion in the life of the Moldovans in the seventeenth century was also reflected in the growing number of hermitages (many of which were also 'dedicated') and the proliferation of obscure local saints, such as Chiriac of Bisericiani who spent sixty years living in a cave.<sup>78</sup> The monastic population continued to be at the heart of Moldova's religious, economic and social life until well into the nineteenth century, and even beyond.

Vasile Lupu was also responsible for helping to maintain the doctrinal purity of the Orthodox faith by curbing Calvinist influences emanating from neighbouring Transylvania. The Reformed church was not only attempting to convert individuals within the Romanian-speaking Orthodox community in Transylvania, but was even instigating reforms with the aim of incorporating the whole of the Orthodox church in Transylvania into its own structure.<sup>79</sup> The spread of Calvinist doctrines had even started to permeate into the very core of the Orthodox church in Constantinople. Kyrillos Lukaris, patriarch from 1620 to 1638, for example, was known to favour reforms of the church which were inspired by Calvinism.<sup>80</sup>

In keeping with his role as defender of Orthodoxy, Lupu rose to the challenge posed by the spread of Calvinism and convened a synod at Iași in 1642. In attendance were Varlaam, metropolitan of Moldova from 1632 to 1653, together with representatives of the Patriarch of Constantinople and of Petru Movilă, the metropolitan of Kiev. Lupu himself 'presided over the work of the synod like the former Byzantine emperors'.<sup>81</sup>



The synod eventually accepted Petru Movilă's *Confessio fidei orthodoxae* ('Confessions of the Orthodox faith') as the Orthodox church's official refutation of Calvinist influences. This was subsequently endorsed by the patriarch of Constantinople and by the patriarchs of Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch: a testament to the importance of the Moldovan court to the Orthodox world as a whole in this period.

Lupu's close relationship with Petru Movilă, a member of the Movilă family which had reigned in Moldova in the early seventeenth century, was of considerable importance in other developments which took place during the prince's reign. The academy opened by Lupu in Iași in 1640 was modelled on the Kiev academy already established by Movilă. The Iași academy taught Greek, Slavonic, Latin, and Romanian, as well as theology, philosophy and rhetoric to up to four hundred students. Lupu also opened a number of elementary schools attached to Moldovan churches and monasteries. Printing was also introduced to the principality through the mediation of Movilă. Hitherto, printed religious works had been imported into Moldova from Poland-Lithuania or Transylvania. In 1642, however, with Movilă's assistance, Metropolitan Varlaam acquired a press from Kiev which was placed in the Trei Ierarhi monastery in Iași. The following year, Varlaam's *Carte românească de învățătură dumenecile preste an și la praznice împărătești și la svînți mari* ('The Romanian Book of Teachings for Sunday and other Major Feasts and Religious Holidays'), or the *Cazania lui Varlaam*, achieved fame as the first religious book in the Romanian language printed in Moldova. The script used by the printing presses of the period continued, however, to consist of Old Church Slavonic characters.

Like many Moldovan boyars fleeing the political upheaval which surrounded almost every change of ruler, Petru Movilă had himself taken refuge in Poland-Lithuania after the murder of his father Simeon, who had been prince of Moldova from 1606 to 1607. Much of Petru Movilă's education took place in Poland, including a period at the school run by the Lvov Dormition Brotherhood. Pupils at the school were taught, amongst other subjects, Greek, Slavonic, Italian and Latin. Through the medium of the latter, in particular, Moldovan boyars educated in Polish exile were exposed to the influence of Western Catholicism and to Renaissance and humanist ideas. Such currents are apparent in the chronicles, written in the Romanian language, of Grigore Ureche (1590–1647), Miron Costin (1633–1691) and his son, Nicolae Costin (1660–1712), who all undertook much of their education in Poland.<sup>82</sup>

Nevertheless, it was the relationship with the Orthodox Ruthene population of Poland-Lithuania which was most significant for the

Moldovans. Migrations of Ruthenes into the Moldovan lands, and of Moldovans into the largely Ruthene-inhabited lands of Poland-Lithuania to the north and east of the principality, had taken place throughout the preceding centuries, and continued during the seventeenth century.<sup>83</sup> Moldova's trading and religious links with the city of Lvov, in particular, were long-established. Moldovan traders in the city had their own market and church, as well as the right to be tried by a Moldovan judge in the event of misdemeanours.<sup>84</sup> Both Alexandru Lăpuşneanu and Petru Şchiopul had been generous benefactors of the Orthodox church in Lvov in the sixteenth century and the Movilă family and Vasile Lupu supported the Lvov Dormition Brotherhood and its school. In addition to Petru Movilă, a number of Moldova's future churchmen were educated at the Lvov school, including metropolitan Dosoftei whose Greek family had taken refuge in Lvov. Close contact was later established between the school at Lvov, and the Kiev and Iaşi academies subsequently set up by Movilă and Lupu.

The ever increasing number of monastic foundations in Moldova, which acted as educational institutions and centres of scholarship, maintained strong links with Orthodox sister-institutions in Poland-Lithuania, as well as those under Ottoman rule. One such was the monastery of Secu, founded by the boyar Nistor Ureche, who was no stranger himself to years of exile in the lands of Poland-Lithuania. Grigore Ureche, son of the founder and future chronicler, as well as the future metropolitans Varlaam and Petru Movilă, all received part of their education at Secu, where they were taught both Greek and Latin.<sup>85</sup>

Petru Movilă's years as metropolitan of Kiev from 1633 to 1647 served to reinvigorate the Orthodox church in Poland-Lithuania, as well as the church in Moldova. The church 'union' of 1596 in Poland-Lithuania, through which a section of the Orthodox church accepted the primacy of the pope in Rome while retaining the Orthodox liturgy, had severely undermined the position of the Orthodox church in the kingdom. It was Petru Movilă who helped to restore the position of the Orthodox church in Poland-Lithuania. As metropolitan, he sought to 'immunize' the Orthodox church against both Catholicism and Calvinism by employing some of their methods. Hence, he improved the organization of the church, encouraged lay participation in the church's work and gathered scholars around him to produce and print updated editions of the Bible and 'Lives of Saints'. Movilă was subsequently influential in the spread of these activities to Moldova, through his cooperation with Metropolitan Varlaam. In 1632 Movilă opened the academy at Kiev which provided the model, as well as many of the teachers, for Lupu's academy in Iaşi.



Movilă's invigoration of the Orthodox church in Poland-Lithuania also resulted in an increase in the output of religious literature produced by the Ruthenes. One of the most important Ruthene Orthodox religious writers of the seventeenth century was Ioannichie Galeatovschi, a teacher and rector at the Kiev academy, who had close links with the church in Moldova. His greatest work was translated into Romanian as *Cheia Înţelesului* ('The Key to Understanding') in the 1670s and was highly influential in the development of religious literature in the Romanian language subsequently produced in the principalities.

It has been argued, however, that the reciprocal religious and cultural relations between the Orthodox Ruthenes and Moldovans under Movilă and Lupu were 'a late blossoming'.<sup>86</sup> By the late sixteenth century, Old Church Slavonic was already in decline as the *lingua franca* integrating the principalities into the religious and cultural world of their East and South Slavs neighbours. In part, this was the result of the ever-growing differentiation amongst the Slavonic languages which meant that Old Church Slavonic was becoming increasingly antiquated and out of touch with the spoken Slavonic languages. Much like Latin in the Western church, Old Church Slavonic was becoming the preserve of the educated few. In the principalities this was even more marked, since the majority peasant population were Romanian-speaking. Moreover, by the seventeenth century, the boyars, upper clergy, and princes were increasingly falling under the influence of Greek and Romanian.

Writing in the early eighteenth century, Dimitrie Cantemir celebrated the diversity of the many national groups who lived in Moldova, which included, in addition to the Moldovans themselves, Bulgarians, Serbs, Albanians, Greeks, Germans, Poles, Cossacks, Jews and Gypsies.<sup>87</sup> The Ottoman conquest of the Byzantine empire and the fall of Constantinople in 1453 had unleashed a flood of Orthodox refugees of various cultural backgrounds, who fled to the relative freedom of the principalities and to other Orthodox lands beyond Muslim control, such as the Orthodox areas of Poland-Lithuania and Muscovy. It was the Greeks, however, who were to become especially influential in the principalities as a result of their previously dominant position within the former Byzantine empire, their control over the Orthodox church in Constantinople and the importance of Greek as one of the 'sacred' languages of the church, as well as of the ancient world.

The diaspora Greeks were already influential in the sixteenth century and many were elected to the Moldovan throne. In addition, their presence in Orthodox cities in Poland-Lithuania such as Lvov also proved to be important to the development of Greek culture in Moldova. Boyars

seeking refuge in Lvov during the succession crises, came into contact with these Greek families from whom many of them learned Greek.<sup>88</sup> The boyars also came into contact with Greek-Byzantine culture at many of the schools in Poland, such as that run by the Lvov Dormition Brotherhood. In the seventeenth century, the academies at Kiev, Iași and the academy in Bucharest, established later in the century, all taught Greek. Since these academies were beyond the direct control of the Turkish authorities, they attracted many Greek students from within the Ottoman Empire, thus reinforcing the Greek presence in the principalities and the importance of Greek as the *lingua franca* and language of culture.

It is common to date the beginning of the Greek 'Phanariot' period (a term which will be explained further below) to the reign of Nicolae Mavrocordat in the principalities in the early eighteenth century. It should, however, be appreciated that the presence of the Greeks, including 'Phanariot' Greeks, was a major factor in the life of the principalities well before the 'official' Phanariot era. The Basarab ruling family in Wallachia had thus been thoroughly hellenized by the time of its extinction in the seventeenth century. In Moldova, members of the Cantacuzino and Ghica 'Phanariot' families gained the throne during the course of the seventeenth century. The higher echelons of the church, especially in Wallachia, had also been occupied by Greeks or Greek-speakers by the end of the century. Neither the church nor the boyars entirely resented this 'hellenization' since for the former, Greek money and influence were important in the fight against the Catholic Counter-Reformation and Uniate movement emanating from Poland-Lithuania or the Habsburg lands, and against Calvinism. Meanwhile, those boyars who were heavily intermarried with the Greeks, found it extremely useful that their relatives 'could intrigue for them at the sultan's court'.<sup>89</sup>

Nevertheless, in the seventeenth century there were a number of revolts by the 'native' boyars against the influential Greeks. Matei Basarab, Vasile Lupu's almost exact contemporary as prince of Wallachia (1632–1654) was brought to power by just such a revolt, as was, ironically, Lupu himself. Lupu's reign proved, however, a great disappointment to those hoping to see Greek influence in Moldova wane. His generosity to the church at home and abroad, and the increasing number of Greek monks and clergymen in charge of the dedicated monasteries in Moldova, aroused resentment amongst sections of the boyar nobility. In addition, the number of Greek teachers in the principality rose as Greek became one of the main languages taught at the schools established by Lupu. The prince was generous in his provision for these teachers, granting a



number of estates for the upkeep of teachers at the school attached to the Trei Ierarhi monastery in Iași. It was largely as a result of Lupu's generosity to the Greek clergy and the establishment of Greek culture in the principality during his reign, that his rival, Gheorghe Ștefan, was able to seize the throne in 1653. Lupu was by now regarded 'as a Greek and a supporter of the Greeks', while the Moldovan boyars regarded Gheorghe Ștefan as being 'from our own people'.<sup>90</sup>

Paradoxically, however, it was under the auspices of a largely hellenized church and Greek-influenced, court that Romanian began to emerge, over the course of the seventeenth century, as the language of the Orthodox liturgy, of the court chancellery and administration, as well as a literary language in its own right.<sup>91</sup> The printing of the *Cazania lui Varlaam* in Iași in 1643, to which we have already referred, was the start of the Moldovan church's transformation into a Romanian-speaking church. Over the subsequent decades, religious and liturgical works were increasingly translated into Romanian. In part, this was an acknowledgement that Old Church Slavonic was a language incomprehensible to Moldova's peasant masses and indeed to most of the lower clergy, whose ignorance of Slavonic was such that many were unable to conduct religious services. It was also a reaction to the Protestant and Calvinist threat to the Orthodox church within the neighbouring principality of Transylvania, where service books in Romanian were already being printed in the sixteenth century. Lupu's synod of Iași in 1642 had been called to counter plans for the integration of the Orthodox church in Transylvania into the Reformed church, to which end a Calvinist catechism in Romanian had been printed, followed by the first Romanian version of the New Testament in 1648. The Orthodox church in Moldova was therefore on the offensive, anxious to ensure the continued loyalty of its Romanian-speaking flock. Metropolitan Varlaam himself wrote a riposte to the Romanian-language Calvinist catechism and in 1644, at the Iași press, he printed his explanation of the seven church sacraments in Romanian as *Șapte Taine ale Bisericii*.

Dosoftei, metropolitan between 1671 and 1686, was a most influential figure in the Moldovan church's transformation, despite his Greek background. He was responsible for the translation into Romanian of numerous works of history, religion and literature. Most important, however, were his translations of liturgical works from Old Church Slavonic, such as the *Dumnezeiasca Liturghie* ('The Divine Liturgy') of 1679, which was dedicated to 'the whole of the Romanian people everywhere who speak this Orthodox language'.<sup>92</sup> His Romanian version of a Slavonic edition of the psalms, *Psaltire a lui David*, was printed in the

1670s and was the first large-scale verse work produced in the Romanian language. The *Psaltirea de înteles* ('The Psalter of Understanding'), a psalter with parallel Old Church Slavonic and Romanian texts, was printed in 1680. In the following years, Dosoftei produced a four-volume *Viața și petrecerea sfinților* ('Lives and Deeds of the Saints') from Greek and Old Church Slavonic sources, which included the deeds of the various Moldovan local saints. It was largely due to the works of clergymen like Varlaam and Dosoftei that 'by the second quarter of the eighteenth century a service book in Slavonic in the Romanian lands became a rarity, and the Slavonic tradition can be said to have expired'.<sup>93</sup>

During the course of the late seventeenth century, Romanian also began to emerge as the language of the chancellery and administration. It is indicative of the growing importance of the language that when Vasile Lupu decided to systematize the Moldovan legal system, he did so in Romanian. This was published as *Carte românească de învățătură de la pravilele împărătești și de la alte guidețe* ('The Romanian Book of Teachings from the Imperial Statutes and Other Judicial Pronouncements') printed in Iași in 1645. Changes within the chancellery were driven by the fact that Romanian was increasingly favoured by the boyars for use in private documents. Consequently, by the turn of the century, few official documents were being produced in Slavonic.

Romanian also emerged as a literary language in its own right during the course of the seventeenth century. The chronicles of Moldovan history produced by Grigore Ureche and Miron and Nicolae Costin were all written in Romanian. Metropolitan Dosoftei's 1681 *Poem cronologic despre domnii Moldovei* ('Chronological Poem regarding the Princes of Moldova'), covering the period from Dragoș' foundation of the principality to the reign of Gheorghe Duca in the 1660s, was the first printed historical work in Romanian, and also put forward the theory that the Moldovans were of both Dacian and Roman descent. The Moldovans' Latin origins was also the theme of Miron Costin's *De neamul moldovenilor* ('On the Origins of the Moldovans') written during the latter part of the century. Such arguments were to be expounded some decades later by Dimitrie Cantemir in his chronicle of Romanian origins, *Hronicul vechimii a Româno-Moldo-Vlahilor*, produced c. 1720, in which he claimed that both the Wallachian and Moldovan peoples were of Roman origin, and argued for their continuous presence on the territory of the former Roman province of Dacia following the departure of the Roman legions. Interestingly as well, in his *Descriptio Moldaviae*, Cantemir claimed that prior to the fifteenth century, the Moldovans had used the Latin script in written Romanian. Old Church Slavonic, he alleged, had only been



introduced into the principality following the Council of Florence, which had brought about a very short-lived union of the Catholic and Orthodox churches. Metropolitan Teoctist, a Bulgarian, had, so Cantemir explained, introduced the Old Church Slavonic script in order to separate the Moldovans from the Latin church and maintain them in the Orthodox sphere. Teoctist was therefore, according to Cantemir, the 'initiator of these barbarities which still dominate in Moldova'.<sup>94</sup>

Despite a growing acceptance of the theory of the common Roman, or Daco-Roman, origins of the Moldovans and Wallachians amongst certain intellectual circles in the late seventeenth century, the belief in this particular account of these peoples' ethno-genesis was by no means widespread and its political implications lay well in the future. The early indications of an anti-Slavonic sentiment expressed by Cantemir was to become ideologically important only in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (not least in Ceauşescu's Romania). As Cantemir's own life-history was to show, relations with Moldova's East Slav Orthodox neighbours remained central to the life of the principality well beyond the seventeenth century, despite the decline in the use of Old Church Slavonic.

The decades after Vasile Lupu's fall from power in 1653 saw a number of attempts at developing political and military relations with the expanding Russian empire. Lupu's successor, Gheorghe Ştefan, attempted to form an alliance with Russia to bring about the return of the Moldovan fortresses occupied by the Ottomans since the fifteenth century. In 1655 the patriarch of Constantinople sent a mission to Moscow on Ştefan's behalf, requesting that Moldova be placed under Russian protection and in 1658 a treaty was drawn up between the two countries. This came to nothing, however, since Ştefan, wisely perhaps, refused to go to war against his Polish-Lithuania neighbour as the price of the Russian alliance.<sup>95</sup>

During the mid-seventeenth century, however, Poland-Lithuanian lost parts of her territory to both Russia and the Ottomans. The acquisition by Russia of Poland-Lithuania's Ukrainian borderlands east of the River Dnieper in 1667, including the city of Kiev, brought Moldova into closer geographical proximity to Russia with all its potential for a new, and closer, political relationship. The Ottomans had also acquired land in the region from the Poles in the 1670s, while a treaty between the Turks and Russians in 1681 allowed the Ottomans to take control of lands between the Dnestr and Dneiper rivers, below the city of Kiev. The Turks now installed the supposedly loyal Greek prince of Moldova, Gheorghe Duca, (reigned 1665–1666, 1668–1672 and 1678–1683) as hetman, in charge of the Turkish Ukrainian lands.<sup>96</sup> Duca was declared 'ruler of the Ukraine

and Moldova', a position he occupied until 1683. He now encouraged Moldovans to move into the Turkish Ukraine, east of Moldova's Dnestr border, by promises of tax freedom and local autonomy. Those who came joined landowners of Moldovan origin already present east of the Dnestr, such as the Movilă family who had owned estates in the region since the 1580s. As Duca's domain now reached the River Dnieper, and thereby bordered onto newly-enlarged Russia, he attempted, through the mediation of Metropolitan Dosoftei, to secure Russian support against both the Turks and Poles. The attempt failed and Duca's status as vassal of the Turks forced him to give them military support against the Christians at the siege of Vienna in 1683.

The Turks' failure to capture Vienna, in part due to the intervention of the Polish king, John Sobieski, was a turning point in the history of the Ottoman empire, marking the beginning of the empire's gradual contraction and decline. The Christian victory at Vienna led to a resurgence of Habsburg power in Central and Eastern Europe, while Poland, led by Sobieski, recaptured the Ukrainian lands lost to the Ottomans. Having done so, Sobieski's army entered Moldova, with the intention of annexing the principality.<sup>97</sup> As a result of the 1699 Peace of Carlowitz between the Turks and the Christian powers, however, the Poles were forced to leave Moldova. The peace additionally confirmed the Habsburg monarchy's reacquisition of most of the Hungarian lands lost after the Battle of Mohács, as well as the principality of Transylvania, thus transforming the Habsburg monarchy into Moldova's immediate neighbour to the west. It was his expectation of Habsburg hegemony in the area following the siege of Vienna which prompted Constantin Cantemir, Moldovan prince from 1685 to 1693, to sign a secret treaty with the Habsburgs in 1690 to assist them against the Turks, although the treaty was never enforced.

### *Dimitrie Cantemir, Russia and Phanariot Rule*

It was, however, to the rising power of Russia that Constantin Cantemir's son by his Greek wife, Dimitrie Cantemir, turned to help free Moldova from the Turks. Dimitrie had been installed as prince in 1710 by the Turks in the belief, mistaken as it turned out, that he would be a loyal vassal, since he had undertaken part of his education in Constantinople. There, he had become conversant not only with the major European languages, but also with Turkish and other oriental languages and had written the first treatise on Turkish music (in Turkish), as well as what some



Romanian scholars consider to be the first novel in the Romanian language, *Istoria ieroglifică* ('The Hieroglyphic History').

Inspired by Peter the Great's military successes, which included the conquest of Turkish Azov and his defeat of the seemingly invincible Swedish king Charles XII at the Battle of Poltava in the Polish Ukrainian lands in 1709, Cantemir entered into negotiations with Peter. This culminated in the April 1711 Treaty of Luts'k in which Cantemir accepted a Russian protectorate over Moldova on condition that the Moldovan throne remained the hereditary preserve of the Cantemir dynasty, that the powers of the Moldovan state remained in the hands of its prince, and that the lands and fortresses lost to the Ottomans be restored. In return, Cantemir promised to assist Russia in its war against the Turks with an army of 10,000 men.<sup>98</sup> In his proclamation to the Moldovan boyars in July 1711, Cantemir justified his request for Russian protection against his Ottoman suzerain by recourse to the so-called 'theory of the capitulations'. According to this, although vassals of the sultan, the rulers of the principalities had entered into agreements, or 'capitulations', with the Ottomans freely and the sultan had agreed to protect the independence of Moldova and Wallachia in exchange for tribute. The Turks had violated these agreements, according to Cantemir, by their seizure of land and fortresses in both principalities and by interfering in the selection of rulers. The 'theory of the capitulations' was not new when Cantemir expounded it in 1711, but was used frequently in the subsequent century and a half by boyars who sought to justify to the European Great Powers the removal of Ottoman suzerainty.

Unfortunately, Cantemir's passionate rhetoric was not matched by prowess on the battlefield and at the Battle of Stănilești, near the River Prut, the combined Russian and Moldovan forces were crushed by the Turks. Many Moldovan boyar families fled with Cantemir into exile in Russia, where he received a title of nobility and estates in Russian Ukraine. He became a counsellor to Peter the Great whom he exhorted to continue Russia's imperial expansion against the Ottomans. He continued his historical and scholarly studies in many languages, which included his *Descriptio Moldaviae*, written at the request of the Berlin Academy, as well as a history of the Ottoman empire, thus becoming in effect Russia's first orientalist. His Russian-educated son, Antioch Cantemir, achieved fame as the originator of satire in Russian literature.

Cantemir's flight from Moldova, however, left the principality entirely at the mercy of the Ottomans. The fortress of Hotin, Moldova's largest fortification, was turned into a *raia* with a Turkish garrison, its position on the Dnestr making it a crucial stronghold against any future Russian

attack on the principality. The Hotin *raia* was larger than any of the other *raia-s* established in Moldova, comprising some hundred villages and three market towns, in addition to the town of Hotin itself. The *raia*'s western border reached as far as the River Prut. The estates of the boyars who had fled to Russia with Cantemir were divided amongst the Turks' loyal supporters.<sup>99</sup> Since the prince of Wallachia, Constantin Brâncoveanu, had also reached an agreement with Peter the Great similar to that of Cantemir, the treachery of the princes of both principalities now frightened the sultan and induced him to place the thrones in the hands of loyal Greek Phanariot families based in Constantinople. Thus, the most important result of Cantemir's Russian escapade was the imposition of Phanariot rule in Moldova and Wallachia by the sultan.

The installation of the Phanariot regime, however, was not simply due to Cantemir and Brâncoveanu's betrayal of their overlord, but should be seen within the wider context of international relations. Changes in the balance of power in the late seventeenth century, and the expansion of the Habsburg empire following its reconquest of Hungary and Transylvania, put Wallachia and Moldova on the 'front line' of the Turkish confrontation with the Catholic Habsburgs. In the east, Moldova faced an increasingly powerful and expanding Russian empire. It was thus necessary for both the principalities to be in loyal hands in the ailing Ottoman empire's conflict with the Christian powers.

We should now turn to the origin of the term 'Phanariot'. The Greek 'Phanariots' had taken their name from the 'Phanar', or 'lighthouse' district of Constantinople, whence a number of Greek families had fled following the Ottoman conquest in order to be in close proximity to the Orthodox patriarchal buildings.<sup>100</sup> By the late seventeenth century, the Phanariots dominated the Orthodox church hierarchy in Constantinople, as well as acting as the patriarchy's bankers and financiers. They had also risen swiftly within the Ottoman administration as a result of their expertise gained at the former Byzantine court. In particular, due to their proficiency in foreign languages, they regularly began to fill the post of 'grand dragoman', or chief translator, to the sultan; in effect a type of foreign minister. Alexandru Mavrocordat was the first Phanariot to achieve international standing as grand dragoman and held this post from 1673 until 1709. In his additional capacity as the sultan's private secretary, Mavrocordat had negotiated the Peace of Carlowitz with the Christian powers in 1699. The Phanariot families also acted as bankers, merchants and doctors to members of the Ottoman court.

To consolidate their position, the Phanariot Greeks sought to acquire land, but since there were restrictions on the purchase of land by non-



Muslims, they began to cast their eyes upon the principalities. Besides having autonomy within the Ottoman empire, the principalities were attractive to the Greeks because they were governed by the sole surviving Orthodox monarchs in South-East Europe and modelled their courts on the pre-1453 Byzantine court. The Phanariot families consequently began to purchase estates in Moldova and Wallachia and to marry into the native boyar, and even into the royal, families. The Phanariot Cantacuzino, Rosetti and Ghica families were amongst the first to integrate themselves into Moldovan and Wallachian society. In the eighteenth century, however, the Porte certainly favoured those Phanariots whose families were still largely based in Constantinople, rather than in the principalities, since members of their close families could act as 'hostages' to ensure the princes' loyalty to the sultan.

The Mavrocordats were one such Constantinople-based family and the first 'official' Phanariot prince to rule in the principalities was Nicolae Mavrocordat, son of the sultan's trusted grand dragoman, Alexandru. Nicolae had already ruled briefly in Moldova before Dimitrie Cantemir, and was appointed once again as prince of Moldova from 1711 to 1715 and in Wallachia from 1715 to 1716 and again between 1719 and 1730. Since the practice of alternating rule in each principality was followed by all Mavrocordat's successors, much of what follows below applies to both Moldova and Wallachia. In the first half of the eighteenth century the thrones of the principalities were dominated in particular by three Phanariot families, the Mavrocordats, Ghicas, and Racovițăș. Subsequently, and until the removal of the Phanariots from power in 1821 after the Greek revolt against the Ottomans, the Ipsilanti, Callimachi and Moruzi families dominated. Each ruler had normally acted as grand dragoman at the Porte before his appointment as prince, through which he had, supposedly, proved his loyalty to the Porte.

The Phanariot era has generally been regarded by Romanian historians as a period of stagnation and decline in the principalities at a time when Western Europe was, allegedly, reaping the benefits of the Enlightenment. The Phanariots, moreover, stand accused of 'orientalizing' Wallachia and Moldova and of cutting off its peoples from European civilization, and in particular from their Latin 'brethren' in the West. Nicolae Iorga was the first eminent historian to argue that, on the contrary, the period was one of constructive reform owing to the work of a number of 'enlightened' Phanariot princes. Volume Seven of Iorga's *Histoire des roumains* published in 1940, which deals with the Phanariot period, is entitled 'The Reformers' and examines in particular the reforms of Nicolae and Constantin Mavrocordat.<sup>101</sup>

Iorga, moreover, pointed out that the 'Greek' Phanariot princes were by no means of purely Greek origin. The Cantacuzinos were probably of Byzantine descent and the Ipsilantis were certainly ethnic Greeks. The Rosëttis, however, were of Levantine Italian origin, while the Ghicäs were of Albanian extraction. Both the Racoviță and the Callimachi families were of Moldovan origin. Moreover, many Phanariot families, such as the Cantacuzinos, Rosettis and Ghicas had, as we have already seen, integrated themselves into the boyar class in both principalities, and some had even been elected ruler, in the seventeenth century.<sup>102</sup> As Cyril Mango has written, 'in short, the leading Phanariot families were a hodgepodge of enterprising Greeks, Romanians, Albanians and Levantine Italians'.<sup>103</sup>

A number of Phanariot rulers were both highly cultivated and keen to reform the chaotic government and administration of the principalities, and they were inspired by Enlightenment ideas. Alexandru Mavrocordat, the 'founder' of the Mavrocordat 'dynasty', as well as being grand dragoman to the sultan, was a scholar and medical doctor, who had studied in Rome, Padua and Bologna. The princely academies in Iași and Bucharest utilized Alexandru's many scholarly works on grammar, rhetoric, philosophy and theology. His son, Nicolae Mavrocordat, was also a scholar who bequeathed to his son, Constantin, a library so rich and vast that it was coveted by both Louis XV and by George II of England, who attempted, unsuccessfully, to induce Constantin to part with it on his father's death. Although he promoted the Greeks in his entourage, Nicolae was an able administrator who, miraculously, even succeeded in lowering the tribute payable to the Porte. He was concerned to improve education in the Moldovan principality and was responsible for strengthening the academy at Iași, established in 1707 following the closure of the academy set up by Vasile Lupu. Nicolae Mavrocordat's writings included a tract on the dangers of nicotine, a very early example of the genre, and entirely suitable for the son of a doctor.

Nicolae's son, Constantin Mavrocordat, is perhaps especially deserving of the title 'Enlightened Despot'. He ruled in Moldova from 1733 to 1735, 1741 to 1743, 1748 to 1749 and in 1769, and alternately in Wallachia.<sup>104</sup> Constantin Mavrocordat was responsible for the abolition of a number of indirect taxes, such as those on cattle or fields under cultivation, both of which were damaging to agricultural productivity. He introduced instead a general tax, payable annually in instalments. Known as a 'francophile' and acquainted with the works of the French 'philosophes', in 1746 in Wallachia and 1749 in Moldova, Mavrocordat declared the right of peasants to redeem themselves, on payment of remuneration to their



lords. For those who were unable to do so, labour services due to their landlords were reduced to twelve days in Wallachia and twenty-four in Moldova.

Mavrocordat also ensured that senior administrative and judicial officials were paid a regular salary in order to prevent them raising money through the sale of lower offices and the imposition of arbitrary fines and taxes, the traditional means whereby such officials had enriched themselves. Constantin improved the standards of schools attached to Moldova's many monasteries and churches, ensuring that the Romanian language was taught in all such institutions. In particular, he was concerned that priests should be able to conduct religious services in Romanian, which he also hoped to elevate as the administrative language in the principalities at all levels. He was responsible in 1741 for the publication of the first collection of documents illustrating the course of Moldovan and Wallachian history.

A member of the Phanariot Ghica family, already long-established in Moldova, Grigore Alexandru Ghica, who ruled from 1764 to 1767 and again from 1774 to 1777, was responsible for further improvements at the academy in Iași. He also established lyceums at a number of provincial towns as well as setting up twenty-three elementary schools.

Several Phanariot rulers attempted to rationalize Moldova's chaotic legal system with its mixture of Byzantine-Roman law and Moldovan customary law. Scarlat Callimachi, who ruled in Moldova in 1806, 1807 to 1810 and again from 1812 to 1819, was responsible for the publication of Moldova's first civil law code. The 'Callimachi code' was based on the Austrian civil code and remained in force until 1864 in Moldova, and longer still in Russian-ruled Bessarabia.<sup>105</sup>

The Phanariot era also saw the translation and printing of many works of the European Enlightenment. Since Greek was one of the main languages of instruction at the princely academies and the monastic schools, and spoken by a substantial number of the boyars, it had become the language of high culture in the principalities. In addition, it was the second language, after Romanian, used in the chancellery and judiciary in the eighteenth century, as well as being the *lingua franca* of merchants and traders in the principalities.<sup>106</sup>

The first Greek press in the Ottoman lands had been established at Cetățuia monastery near Iași in 1682. Both the monastery and the press owed their existence to the generosity of the Greek prince, Gheorghe Duca.<sup>107</sup> In the relative autonomy of the principalities, away from the restrictive atmosphere of Constantinople, important works of the Enlightenment, including studies by John Locke and Montesquieu, were

translated and circulated in Greek.<sup>108</sup> Many more of the fruits of the Enlightenment were translated into Romanian, such as Catherine the Great's philosophical and legal treatise, *Nakaz* ('Instructions'), and the works of Voltaire which appeared in the 1770s. Indeed, from the middle of the century French works were regularly translated into Romanian under the auspices of the Phanariot princes.

Nevertheless, despite the many positive examples of Phanariot rule, and the role of the princes in the circulation of the literature of the Enlightenment, the era as a whole certainly deserves something of the evil reputation which has attached to it. In his defence of the Phanariots, Nicolae Iorga criticized the Greek doctor, Zallony, for his 'Essay on the Fanariots', originally published in France in 1824.<sup>109</sup> Zallony's aim had been to alert Europe to the abuses of the Phanariot system in the principalities, fearing that the Phanariots would take control of a future independent Greek state over which they would have a similarly corrupting influence. It is hardly suprising, therefore, that Zallony's work portrays the Phanariot system in a grim, and frequently absurd, light. Many of Zallony's observations and criticisms, however, are borne out by observations made by Western travellers to the principalities, as well as by subsequent historians.

The eighteenth century saw an intensification of all the defects of Ottoman suzerainty in the principalities which had been exposed in previous centuries. The very institution of the Phanariot regime had come about as a result of the Porte's need for more direct control over the affairs of the principalities, threatened now by the growing power and influence of the Habsburg monarchy and Russia. From the 1730s, the ruler was appointed directly by the sultan, without even the pretence of consultation with the boyars.<sup>110</sup> The foreign policy of the principalities was now entirely in the hands of the sultan, in practice and no longer only in theory, and miscreants who dabbled with foreign powers were frequently executed. The Moldovan and Wallachian armies were reduced to little more than a princely guard. During the course of the eighteenth century, the number of Turks permitted to live within the principalities grew, especially in the areas around the *raia-s* where they acquired land and were useful in enforcing requisitioning. The Turkish monopoly on agricultural produce also increased, especially after the middle years of the century when the Ottomans lost their 'bread baskets' in Egypt and the Crimea.<sup>111</sup> This made Moldovan and Wallachian grain even more essential for feeding Constantinople, where famine was not uncommon, as well as the inhabitants of the *raia-s* on the Danube and Dnestr rivers. Requisitioning took place regardless of local needs.



Meanwhile, the financial obligations placed on each new prince increased. As well as the annual tribute, and the 'fee' for appointment, the Phanariots were obliged to make an additional payment after three years to renew their appointment. New incumbents were also responsible for paying off any debts left by their predecessors. In addition, the Ottomans proved inventive in finding additional means of raising money, which they then 'obliged' their faithful vassals to pay. Steven Runciman provides a fine example of one such financial obligation. 'The prince was appointed at Constantinople and consecrated there by the patriarch. He had to arrive at his new capital within thirty days, or else pay a fine of some sixteen gold pounds to the Aga of the Janissaries for every day over the thirty till he arrived. Tactful princes were never over-punctual.'<sup>112</sup> Indeed, the huge costs of the throne led to the financial ruin of both the Mavrocordat and Racoviță families over the course of the eighteenth century.

As in previous centuries, therefore, it was very much in the Porte's interests to ensure a rapid turnover of rulers. Between 1711, when Nicolae Mavrocordat became prince, and 1821 when Phanariot rule in the principalities ended, there were some thirty-six changes of ruler in Moldova and the average reign was little over two years. It should be noted, however, that this situation was little different to that which prevailed in earlier periods of Ottoman suzerainty. As William Wilkinson, the British consul in Bucharest, explained, the sultan regarded the principalities 'as farms which were to be let out to the highest bidders; the farmer-princes were therefore deposed and recalled, whenever the offers and promises of others of their countrymen appeared more advantageous'.<sup>113</sup> Under such circumstances, even such well-meaning Phanariots as Constantin Mavrocordat had little freedom of action. He was forced to rescind many of his reforms due to financial pressure, and at one stage was temporarily exiled for failure to pay a 'supplementary charge', his throne being in the meantime occupied by a more cooperative prince. The system made any long-term attempts at reforms self-defeating. As Wilkinson explained, the princes 'live under the incessant apprehension of sudden recall and disgrace, [which] induces them to bestow their whole attention on such resources only as are most immediately within their reach, and to neglect any plan that merely offers a remote prospect of gain'.<sup>114</sup>

Such problems were often compounded by the many wars between the Ottomans, Habsburg monarchy and Russia fought during the century on the soil of the principalities, which created attendant conditions of lawlessness. Alexandru Ipsilanti, for example, had introduced significant reforms into the legal system in Wallachia, including the production of a

printed law code in 1780 and the establishment of tribunals in Bucharest with the right of appeal against decisions of the princely divan. His attempts to bring about similar reforms in Moldova during his two year reign from 1786 to 1788, however, were cut short by the the Janissaries, who had been sent to guard the Moldovan border against the Russians but chose instead to plunder the prince's capital of Iași.

Despite these disadvantages, the thrones of the principalities remained attractive to the Phanariots for a number of reasons. In particular, there was the considerable prestige which surrounded the princes' status as the only Orthodox rulers under Ottoman suzerainty. This was symbolized by the grand investiture and anointment of the new princes by the patriarch in Constantinople. The Phanariot families' desire to acquire the thrones was intimately entwined with their hopes that the Ottomans could be expelled from Europe, for which the principalities might provide the base.<sup>115</sup> The Phanariots' pretensions to imperial grandeur were reflected in the court ceremonial which seems to have reached proportions unseen in previous centuries. The Greek doctor, Zallony, criticized by Iorga for his wholesale condemnation of Phanariot rule in the principalities, vividly described the prince's court and the fawning deference shown towards him by the boyars. The latter regularly carried the prince around his palace 'whilst two or three other lords hold the train of his robe. Under this aspect of a paralytic, he passes through his apartments'. At the dining table, even the prince's bread was cut up for him into small pieces by fussing servants, while his wine was offered up in a crystal glass. Meanwhile, Bohemian musicians serenaded the pampered prince. The ringing of bells was thereafter deemed necessary, according to Zallony, to announce to the enthralled world that the prince was about to take his siesta, and to inform the world of his awakening.<sup>116</sup> That such excesses were a normal part of courtly life is confirmed by Thomas Thornton, an English merchant in Constantinople, who described the princely courts in the principalities as being 'a ridiculous combination of all that is grotesque in ceremony with all that is vulgar in manners . . .'.<sup>117</sup>

A further advantage for the incumbents of the thrones was that for as long as the prince could maintain the sultan's trust, which was admittedly rarely a lengthy period, the prince had almost limitless authority in his domestic affairs. The collective powers of the boyars on the princely divan were insignificant because the prince controlled all appointments. These were regularly filled by the prince's Greek relatives, described by Thornton as the 'flock of harpies' from Constantinople and a source of great resentment amongst the native boyars.<sup>118</sup> If these boyars wished to gain the new prince's good opinions and occupy a position on the divan,



they had to win him over by showering him with 'magnificent presents; for presents have a magic power over the great men of the East'. According to Zallony, once the prince was installed, however, he exercised 'a despotic sovereignty' and his 'most earnest care' was 'to invest his nearest relatives with the first dignities . . .'.<sup>119</sup>

The profits that could be made by the prince and his relatives were usually more than sufficient to off-set the huge costs of appointment. Traditional means of raising funds such as tax-farming and the sale of offices continued apace. The post of chief minister to the prince was very expensive but much sought after since the minister could then sell on further offices to local boyars. Since few of these officials were paid proper salaries, the costs were ultimately paid by the peasantry, who bore the brunt of taxation and the other financial extortions whereby officials made their money. Princes and tax-farmers were, like the Turks, adept at inventing new taxes and fines.

William Wilkinson was greatly struck by the indolence and rapacity of both the 'native' and Greek boyars.<sup>120</sup> 'Money', he declared, 'is their only stimulus; and the means they generally employ to obtain it are not the efforts of industry . . .', but rather those of tax-farming or sale of offices.<sup>121</sup> The prince's Greek relatives, meanwhile, came to the principalities 'for the express purpose of amassing a fortune, and immediately give themselves up to the seductions of luxury'.<sup>122</sup>

The prince could also make his fortune by exploiting his role in requisitioning the agricultural produce bound for Constantinople, under the terms of the Turkish monopoly. William Wilkinson commented on the principalities' great wealth of agricultural commodities. Especially abundant were wheat, wax, honey, butter, cheese, hides and timber, all of which, however, were subject to the Ottoman monopoly. Nevertheless, the prince and his followers could make a profit out of this since the products bound for Turkey, 'are bought by the local governor for about one-fourth of the prices current in the market, and one-sixth of their value in Turkey'.<sup>123</sup>

Some Phanariot rulers even exploited to their own advantage the periods of dearth caused by the devastations of war and Ottoman requisitioning. Alexandru Moruzi, who ruled three times in Moldova between 1792 and 1807, extorted loans from the local monasteries during a time of famine. With this money he bought grain from the Bulgarian lands which he then sold to the starving Moldovan peasants at hugely inflated prices.<sup>124</sup>

There is, therefore, some truth in Zallony's comment that 'the system of the hospodar . . . is plunder'. Zallony went on to observe that when the new prince proceeded to his capital, 'the sound of bells . . . throws the

people into consternation. Is it possible that they could rejoice at the sight of their new sovereign, who, like a vulture, is about to cast himself on a new prey?' <sup>125</sup> It is perhaps to the period of Phanariot rule that the Romanian proverb owes its origin, 'a change of rulers is the joy of fools'.

According to Thomas Thornton, the consequences of this government of despotic Greeks and degenerate boyars was to lead the general population into a state of apathy. Since they could not reap the fruits of their labour, the people 'exert no ingenuity, and apply themselves to no new branches of industry'.<sup>126</sup> William Wilkinson expressed similar views. He was fully aware of the great unexploited mineral resources of the principalities, but observed that the inhabitants eschewed work which would only serve to 'fill the prince's coffers'. Indeed, far from providing information which contradicts Zallony's condemnation of Phanariot rule, Wilkinson believed that 'there does not perhaps exist a people labouring under a greater degree of oppression from the effect of despotic power, and more heavily burdened with impositions, and taxes, than the peasantry of Wallachia and Moldavia . . .'.<sup>127</sup>

A further financial benefit accruing to the Phanariot incumbents of the Moldovan and Wallachian thrones was the ease with which they could exploit their intimate connection with the patriarchy of Constantinople. While simony may have been practised in the principalities in previous centuries, it now became so widespread as to be institutionalized. All high ecclesiastical offices in Constantinople and the principalities were sold for large sums and patriarchs were appointed and dismissed at will for financial gain.

Despite the increasing levels of corruption, the Orthodox church remained at the heart of Moldovan cultural life.<sup>128</sup> New monasteries were established in the eighteenth century, especially in the lands between the Prut and Dnestr rivers where over a dozen were built, including Hârbovaţ in the 1730s and Tabăra in the 1780s. The monastic expansion was in part due to the high levels of destruction, and plundering, which took place during the century's many wars, and which set in train in their wake a process of restoration and rebuilding. Suitably enough a number of hospitals were founded in the monasteries over the course of the century.

Paradoxically, despite the Phanariots' relationship with the Orthodox church in Constantinople, most of the monasteries erected during their period of rule were undertaken through the generosity of wealthy boyars and churchmen rather than the princes themselves. Indeed, links with the Orthodox 'commonwealth' as a whole were less strong in the Phanariot era than during the seventeenth century. Support for the monastic houses on Mount Athos declined and the patriarchs visited the principalities less



often, although a notable exception was Patriarch Silvestros of Antioch who passed through Moldova *en route* to Moscow and installed an Arabic-language press in Iași. The Phanariot rulers seemed to have been more interested in supporting Greek schools in the lands of present-day Greece, and the patriarchal school in Constantinople. Although the hierarchy of the Orthodox church in Wallachia was heavily Greek-dominated, this was not, however, the case in Moldova where the church authorities largely succeeded in blocking the elevation of Greeks to high office.<sup>129</sup> The Moldovan church, therefore, retained a more 'native', Romanian-speaking character throughout the Phanariot era.

Despite the centrality of the church in the life of the principalities, William Wilkinson was shocked to discover the prevalence of superstitions redolent of paganism amongst the peasantry. 'They firmly believe in all sorts of witchcraft', he wrote, 'in apparitions of the dead, in ghosts, and in all kinds of miracles . . .'.<sup>130</sup> This may have been a reflection on the poor quality of the lower clergy, who were themselves drawn overwhelmingly from the peasant population of a land which had not undergone industrial or agricultural 'development' by the early nineteenth century.

Moldova retained its overwhelmingly rural character throughout the Phanariot era, and beyond.<sup>131</sup> Westerners travelling through the principality during the 'high noon' of the Phanariot period in the early nineteenth century extolled the beauties and fertility of the Moldovan landscape but were also struck by its archaic state. The Scottish army doctor, Adam Neale, for example, commented on the vast expanses of undrained marshes and lakes, as well as the grassy steppes, dotted with large flocks of sheep, herds of horned cattle and magnificent horses. 'Moldavia', he wrote, 'remains in its primitive state . . . [with] . . . villages of the most primeval character, surrounded by wattle fences.'<sup>132</sup> Such impressions of untamed nature were doubtless reinforced by a night in the forest where Neale's sleep was inconvenienced by the eerie howling of distant wolves and the rushing waters of ice-cold streams and rivers in the rocky crevasses.<sup>133</sup>

A German visitor, Freiherr von Campenhausen, was able to appreciate Moldova's natural charms, unencumbered by the economic imperatives of many of the British travellers.<sup>134</sup> Von Campenhausen was enchanted by the natural abundance of the Moldovan lands between the Prut and Dnestr rivers which teemed with rich animal and birdlife, and flourishing plants. He described the lands around Ismail and Chilia on the Danube river as 'the homeland of the magpie', which lived amongst the high and leafy trees, the wide variety of fruit-trees and lush vineyards. He also admired the beauty of the town gardens in Akkerman where fruit-trees,

roses, lilies, balsam and other sweet-smelling flowers grew together in unorganized abandon or, as he put it, 'in Turkish style'.<sup>135</sup> Von Campenhausen was charmed by the local Turkish 'flower-language' ('*eine Blumensprache*') in which 'every flower, every tree, every weed, has a meaning . . .'. The cypress tree, for example, expressed sadness, and the oak, peace. Lavender symbolized work and industriousness, while rosemary spoke of faithfulness, and the rose of beauty.<sup>136</sup>

That an abundance of flowers had long been a feature of the Moldovan principality is suggested by the memoirs of the Hungarian, Kelemen Mikes, who travelled from Bucharest to Iași in the middle of the 1730s. 'Our journey was a delight,' wrote Kelemen, 'and a bride could have delighted in accompanying us; for all the way from Bucharest to Iași she would have trodden on nothing but many, many different sorts of flowers — everywhere the meadows were filled with flowers, so that our horses stepped on nothing but carnations and tulips.'<sup>137</sup> Two centuries later, the Soviet authorities were to exploit Moldova's rich variety of flowers and herbs for industrial purposes. Moldova became the Soviet Union's main producer of essential oils, especially those of rose, lavender, sage and mint, used in the perfume, pharmaceutical and confectionary industries.<sup>138</sup>

Many visitors to the principality in the early nineteenth century, commented on the similarity between the Moldovan peasants' dress and that of their putative Dacian ancestors depicted on Trajan's column in Rome. William Wilkinson, for instance, observed that 'the dress of the male peasants bears some resemblance to that of the Dacians, as represented in the figures on Trajan's pillar in Rome'.<sup>139</sup> According to Adam Neale, 'the dress and warlike aspect of the Moldavians is strikingly picturesque, and remains nearly the same as when . . . the Roman artists chiselled the *basso relief*' for the pillar of Trajan'.<sup>140</sup> This is an interesting reflection, perhaps, of the dissemination of the 'Daco-Roman' theory amongst certain European intellectuals. For Adam Neale, the somewhat barbaric appearance of the Moldovan peasants was reinforced by the fact that they lived 'like Tartars as much on horseback as on foot'.<sup>141</sup> Indeed, the many fine horses bred on the Moldovan steppes provided a plentiful supply for the Austrian and Prussian cavalries at this time.<sup>142</sup>

Moldova's urban inhabitants, particularly those who surrounded the court, clearly had a more pronounced 'oriental' air, reflecting a society, infused with Ottoman, and the remnants of Byzantine social codes, in which rank, status and occupation were reflected in dress. Freiherr von Campenhausen rather fancifully described the garb worn by the people of Iași as having a part-Turkish, part-Chinese and part-Jewish appearance. The coffee-houses in the city were also in the Turkish style, with their low



divans, and were full throughout the day with the city's exotically dressed, if indolent, inhabitants.<sup>143</sup> Zallony described the elaborate dress of the prince himself, which also reflected Turkish fashion. Not being a Muslim, however, the prince did not wear a turban, but wore instead 'a cylindrical bonnet of yellow cloth, surrounded by black sable'. The prince's pre-eminent position was also symbolized by the practice of 'ornamenting the interior of his slippers with red cloth'; perhaps a remnant of the Byzantine emperors' sole right to wear the imperial 'purple' (actually a dark red). Further down the social scale, the boyars were distinguished from lesser mortals by the *calpac*, or bonnet, which consisted of black lamb skin in a balloon shape adorned with a red tassel. The relative rank of the boyars was reflected in the size of their bonnets. Inevitably, the boyars were keen to outdo each other in the size of their headgear, the unfortunate consequence of which was to lead them to wear bonnets so ludicrously large as 'to prevent a boyar from admitting a friend into his carriage'.<sup>144</sup>

Freiherr von Campenhausen, while admiring Moldova's natural beauties, was shocked to find that the streets of large settlements like Iași or Bender were narrow, dark and dirty. Moreover, the Moldovan towns were still subject to regular outbreaks of diseases, and even plague, now unheard of in the cities of Central and Western Europe.<sup>145</sup>

The 'Byzantine' absolutist pretensions of the Phanariot princes and the widespread abuses of the system of government in the principalities in the eighteenth century provoked the Moldovan and Wallachian boyars to demand limitations on the authority of the prince, and a return to the system of election of native princes. There was a great dislike especially of the Greek boyars who surrounded the prince and the influence they wielded. The 'graecophobia' already visible in the seventeenth century, became more widespread, especially amongst the 'native' boyars who were excluded from the spoils of Phanariot rule. Byzantine culture and traditions, for centuries regarded as the very bedrock of civilization itself, were now perceived as both oppressive and alien by many of the boyars. This was compounded by the growth of Greek nationalism in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, which associated Greek identity with a specific territory rather than with a supra-national heritage (although of course the 'Megali Idea' sought to reconcile the two). Thus, by the 1820s a sense of loyalty towards the 'Byzantine commonwealth', which had previously tied together Orthodox believers of diverse ethnicities, was held by few in the principalities.<sup>146</sup>

A number of attempts were made during the course of the century to oust the Phanariot rulers from the Moldovan throne.<sup>147</sup> These included an attempt in 1753 to dethrone Constantin Racoviță, infamous for his

oppressive taxes and the abuses of the Greek boyars who surrounded him. Later in the century, Grigore Ghica III faced an anti-Phanariot movement during his second reign from 1774 to 1777 and in 1775 an angry mob, headed by the Moldovan metropolitan, stormed the court. Ghica's successor, Constantin Moruzi, faced a similar challenge in 1778 and in 1796 a secret anti-Phanariot society was established in Moldova. None of these revolts were ultimately successful in replacing the Phanariot regime. This was achieved instead by the Greek revolt, which broke out on Moldovan soil in 1821, which finally convinced the Ottomans that the Phanariot Greeks were no longer reliable as rulers of the principalities.

As well as fomenting plots against the Phanariot rulers, the boyars in the principalities had another weapon in their armoury in the form of petitions sent to the European Great Powers. In these petitions the principalities' problems were enumerated, together with proposals for reform and requests that the 'powers' should intervene on behalf of the principalities at the Porte. In particular, the boyars sought to return to the system of government by native princes. Many petitions requested that limitations be placed on the principalities' economic obligations to the Porte; others listed possible administrative reforms, and changes to the make-up of the princely divan (or council), and some even drew attention to the plight of the peasantry under Phanariot rule. It should be noted, however, that the goal of the petitioners was not radical social reform, but an alteration in the scheme and manner of government. Moreover, calls for 'national unity' or full political independence were rare.<sup>148</sup> The earliest proposal for Moldovan and Wallachian unification was the memorandum put together by Mihai Cantacuzino in 1772 which was sent to the Habsburg, Prussian and Russian rulers.

Nevertheless, the notion of the common Roman or 'Latin' origins of the Romanian-speakers in the principalities and Transylvania gained currency during the course of the eighteenth century, especially as a result of the historical and philological studies produced by the so-called 'Transylvanian School' of Uniate clergymen. This emphasis on the 'Latinity' of Romanian-speakers coincided with the growing admiration for the French language and culture amongst the boyar class, both native and Greek. Through allowing the translation of French books into Romanian, the Phanariot princes were themselves in part responsible for the growing fashion for all things French. Moreover, during the eighteenth century, the Phanariot rulers themselves were obliged to be conversant in French, the *lingua franca* of diplomacy and cultivated society throughout much of Europe. A number of Phanariot princes, such as Constantin Mavrocordat, were known francophiles. The princes regularly employed



French secretaries at their courts and French tutors for their children, while the academies at Bucharest and Iași attended by the boyars also taught the French language.<sup>149</sup> As a result of these developments, by the early 1830s, the French language and French culture had replaced Greek as the principal vehicle of foreign influence in both the principalities.

In addition, around the turn of the century, many boyar families began to send their sons to be educated in France, where they fell further under the spell of French culture and were increasingly disposed to view themselves as part of the 'Latin' family of Europeans: a perception which only served to differentiate them yet further from their Greek and Slavonic co-religionists. The ideological developments surrounding the French Revolution and the Napoleonic period were to provide these Moldovan and Wallachian boyars with liberal and national ideas which were to bear fruit in the movement for national unity. The prevalence of such ideas during the Phanariot era, however, should not be exaggerated. Thomas Thornton's meeting with representatives of some of the more ancient boyar families in the early nineteenth century is instructive in this regard. These proudly informed Thornton that they were 'the descendants of the Slavi, and are of a distinct race from the people, who have sprung from the alliance of the Romans with the original Dacians . . .'.<sup>150</sup> The Moldovans in particular, amongst whom the Greek influence was less strong than in Wallachia, retained strong connections with the world of the Orthodox East Slavs throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

### *The Growth of Russian Influence in the Moldovan Principality*

The importance of Russia, in particular, in the life of the principalities was reflected in the growing number of petitions sent to the Russian court, requesting the reform of the Phanariot system of government. Although the growth of French interest in the Danubian region during the era of Napoleonic expansion led the boyars to increase the number of petitions sent to France, Russia remained the main recipient of petitions from the principalities from the 1760s right through until the 1830s.<sup>151</sup>

At this point it would be appropriate to review the history of Moldova's relations with Russia up to the eighteenth century. Political relations between Moldova and the principality of Muscovy, and subsequently Russia, seem to have been slender in the centuries before Dimitrie Cantemir's alliance with Peter the Great. Stephen the Great had close

diplomatic relations, as well as contact through marriage, with Ivan III, but this did not lead to any lasting links between the two countries. In the sixteenth century, Bogdan, son of Alexandru Lăpuşneanu, sought refuge in Moscow, and Michael the Brave had diplomatic contacts with the tsar, but to what end remains unclear.<sup>152</sup>

Moldova, in any event, was geographically separated from the Russian lands by Poland-Lithuania, and amongst the Orthodox East Slavs, it was with their Ruthene and Cossack neighbours that the Moldovans had the closest relations. It was not until Russia began to emerge as a significant power in the seventeenth century that the Moldovans began to seek the tsar's aid against the Ottomans. The earliest examples of this by Gheorghe Ştefan in the 1650s and Gheorghe Duca in the 1670s proved a failure, but were clearly serious. The patriarch of Constantinople himself intervened with the tsar on Ştefan's behalf, while metropolitan Dosoftei acted as mediator between Moscow and Duca. Nevertheless, there is much truth in the assertion that 'up until the reign of Peter the Great . . . relations between the principalities and Russia, that is to say Moscow, amounted to next to nothing'.<sup>153</sup>

Neither do religious-cultural links between Moldova and Russia appear to have been especially strong before the seventeenth century. While the peregrinations of numerous Orthodox clergymen and monks of Greek, Serb, or Bulgarian origin in the Russian lands are recorded from the late fifteenth century onwards, there are next to no such records of visitors from the principalities before the seventeenth century. This may well have been a by-product of the lack of political relations but, more plausibly, it was due to the fact that the Orthodox church in the principalities was richly endowed by both the princes and the boyars and had no need of the tsar's benevolence.<sup>154</sup>

Indeed, until well into the seventeenth century it was the Moldovan church, even more so than that of Wallachia, which acted as the protector of the 'Byzantine commonwealth' under Ottoman rule. In this capacity, Moldova acted as a bridge or mediator between the world of the Balkan South Slavs and Greeks and the world of the East Slavs. A number of cultural streams reached the Russian lands through Moldova, including possibly the Hesychast monastic tradition, through Neamţ monastery in particular. Many Old Church Slavonic religious texts also reached Russia through the mediation of the scriptorium at Putna. In the seventeenth century, Greek cultural influence spread to Russia through the products of the Greek press established at Cetăţuia monastery near Iaşi.

It was only with the establishment of the Moscow patriarchy in the late sixteenth century that the Russian tsars began to regard themselves as the



protector of Orthodoxy, with Moscow as the 'Third Rome'. Even in the mid-seventeenth century, however, it was still the Moldovan church, especially during the reign of Vasile Lupu, which was at the heart of the Orthodox world and at the forefront of the struggle against Calvinism, and through Moldova's close association with the metropolitanate of Kiev under Petru Movilă, also Orthodoxy's main bastion against Uniate and Catholic influence.

Nevertheless, the seventeenth century saw the first significant religious contacts between Moldova and Russia. Russian icons had long been prized in the principality. In the 1620s, the archimandrite Varlaam, the future metropolitan of Moldova, was sent on a mission to Moscow to procure icons for the religious houses in Iași. Lupu had extensive correspondence with Tsar Michael Fedorovic on the question of icons, as well as in the matter of the training of the artists employed to paint the church of the Trei Hierarhi in Iași. The Moldovan prince sent a number of his representatives to Moscow and honoured the tsar with the gift of an Arab horse. But the influence was largely one way at this time: from the principalities to Russia. Even some Russian historians agree that until the seventeenth century, it was the Byzantine influence, mediated through the principalities, which enriched the Orthodox heritage in the Russian lands.<sup>155</sup>

It was only in the eighteenth century, therefore, that both the political and religious connection with Russia became significant in Moldova. The century saw Russia's domination of the icon 'market', especially after 1770 when Russian factory-made icons began to circulate widely in the principalities.<sup>156</sup> There was also a renewal of monastic spiritual life in Moldova which brought together members of both the Russian and Moldovan Orthodox churches. The monk Paisie was originally from a monastery in Poltava in Ukraine and established an order at Dragomirna monastery in Moldova in the 1760s dedicated to community living, obedience, poverty and humility, as well as prayer, work and care for the sick. Paisie subsequently moved to Secu monastery and eventually Neamț monastery where he was responsible for a late-flowering of both scholarly and spiritual renewal. Paisie's reputation attracted to Neamț novices from throughout the Orthodox world, including many Russians and Ruthenes, as well as Moldovans. His pupils were responsible for the translation of many Russian books into Romanian, including the 'Life of the Saints' by Saint Dimitri of Rostov in 1810. At around the same time, a Russian priest based at Iași printed the first Romanian-Russian dictionary.<sup>157</sup>

It was the military and territorial expansion of the Russian empire in the eighteenth century, however, which was to have the most profound

effect upon the fate of Moldova. In the one hundred and one years between the institution of the Phanariot regime in Moldova in 1711 and the Russian annexation of the Moldovan lands between the Prut and Dneestr rivers in 1812, the clash of the three empires — the Ottoman, Russian and Habsburg — resulted in six major wars totalling twenty-three years of warfare, largely fought on the territory of the principalities. During the 1735 to 1739 war, the Habsburg monarchy fought alongside the Russians against the Ottomans and, for the final year of the war, Moldova was occupied by Russian troops. A number of leading Moldovan boyar families petitioned the tsar, requesting the annexation of the principality by Russia. Suitably enough, it was Dimitrie Cantemir's two nephews who drew up a draft treaty under which Moldova would be placed under Russian sovereignty, but with the boyars maintaining their traditional privileges, such as the right to elect the prince. Unfortunately for the pro-Russian elements, the war proved to be a victory for the Turks and the Russians were obliged to withdraw from Moldova. The Turkish victory was to prove, however, merely a stay of execution for the Ottoman empire, and the second half of the century was to see considerable gains by both the Habsburg monarchy and the Russian empire at the Turks' expense.

During the 1768–1774 Russo-Turkish war, the Russian army occupied both principalities from 1769 onwards and received considerable military aid from their supporters in both Wallachia and Moldova.<sup>158</sup> The boyars in Moldova once again requested annexation by Russia, regarding this prospect as preferable to remaining under Ottoman suzerainty. The war proved to be a massive victory for the Russians and the terms of the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainardji greatly increased Russian influence both in the principalities and throughout the Ottoman lands. The treaty guaranteed the free exercise of Orthodoxy in the Ottoman empire and granted the Russians the right to intercede with the Porte on behalf of all Orthodox Christians. In addition, Russian ministers in Constantinople were permitted to 'remonstrate' in favour of the principalities at the sultan's court. Provision was also made for foreign consulates to be opened in Ottoman cities. The treaty was also an economic success for the Russians in that it officially made the Black Sea and the Straits open to all Russian commercial vessels, as well as giving Russian merchants complete freedom of movement throughout the principalities and along the course of the Lower Danube.

Baron Thugut, the Habsburg minister of war, clearly recognizing the importance of the treaty in promoting Russian hegemony in the Ottoman lands, commented wryly that 'the whole erection of the stipulations of the



Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji is a model of skill on the part of the Russian diplomatists, and a rare example of imbecility on the part of the Turkish negotiators. By the skilful combination of the articles which that treaty contains, the Ottoman Empire becomes from henceforth a kind of Russian province'.<sup>159</sup> As a later commentator observed, the treaty 'strangely entangled things spiritual with things temporal . . . [and] presented . . . an inexhaustible store of negotiations for times of peace, and standing pretext for declaring war'.<sup>160</sup> The inevitable Ottoman attempts to evade the stipulations of the treaty did indeed allow the Russians, prompted by their Moldovan and Wallachian petitioners, to seek to intervene further in the affairs of the principalities.

The close of the 1768–1774 war also saw the first dismemberment of Moldovan territory by one of the Christian powers, and set a precedent for Russia's own annexation of Moldovan lands a few decades later. Under the terms of a convention of May 1775, the Turks awarded the north-western corner of Moldova to the Habsburg monarchy as a 'reward' for the monarchy's neutrality during the war. This territory, of some 10,000 km<sup>2</sup>, became known in the Habsburg monarchy as 'Bukovina', a neologism referring to the many beech trees which grew in northern Moldova. It remained part of the monarchy until it was incorporated into Romania after the First World War. The loss of 'Bukovina' was not only a major breach of the territorial integrity of the principality, but also a significant blow to its religious and cultural life, since the monarchy's gains included the historic capital of Suceava and a number of Moldova's foremost monastic foundations, including Putna, which housed the tomb of Stephen the Great.<sup>161</sup>

The Russians also made further territorial gains at Ottoman expense in the years after the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji. In 1783 they wrested control of the Crimea from the Ottomans thus securing their domination over the Black Sea. In accordance with the terms of the treaty, the Russians also opened consulates in Bucharest and Iași in the early 1780s. These consulates were to prove immensely important in the cultivation of links with pro-Russian boyars and Phanariot rulers. The growing Russian influence in the principalities made it even more essential for the Phanariot princes to strengthen their contacts with the court at St Petersburg. This was a risky activity, since discovery by the Porte usually led to a summary beheading. The Orthodox Greeks throughout the Ottoman empire, however, had long-standing relations with their Russian co-religionists. Many of the Phanariots, and other Greek families in the principalities, had links through marriage with the Russian nobility, while others had operated as traders for the Russians within the Ottoman empire or had served as

officers in the Russian navy and army. Contacts with the court at St Petersburg, therefore, were not solely the preserve of the Moldovan and Wallachian boyars during the Phanariot period. One such pro-Russian prince was Alexandru Mavrocordat II who ruled in Moldova from 1785 to 1786. Mavrocordat was dethroned owing to the machinations of the Habsburgs, who managed to convince the Porte that he was too closely linked to the Russians. As it turned out, the Habsburg diplomats were correct, since Mavrocordat was the head of a Greco-Russian plot to provoke the Greeks and Moldovans in the principality to rise up against the Turks in favour of Russia. The deposed prince fled to Russia with many of his boyar supporters.

The war of 1787 to 1792 again saw military support for the Russians from within the principalities and, following the end of hostilities, a number of pro-Russian families withdrew with the Russian army across the River Dnestr. Under the terms of the 1792 Treaty of Iași, the Russians gained all the lands between the rivers Bug and Dnestr, thus making the Russian empire Moldova's immediate neighbour. As a result, Russian influence in the principalities went from strength to strength. Under the Russo-Turkish convention of 1802, rulers were to serve for a seven-year term, and could not be appointed, or dismissed, without Russian approval. All offices in the principalities were to be awarded to 'native' boyars where possible, and Russia had the right to intervene at the Porte if these stipulations were violated. The new Russian ambassador at the Porte from 1803, A. Y. Italinsky, used this convention to expand Russian influence still further.<sup>162</sup> In particular Italinsky cultivated the pro-Russian Phanariot, Constantin Ipsilanti, for whom the Russians secured the throne of Wallachia, and the grand dragoman at the Porte, Dimitrie Moruzi, brother of the Moldovan prince, Alexandru Moruzi. The need for the Russians to increase their influence at the Porte and in the principalities was occasioned by growing French interest in the fate of the principalities and the lands of the Ottoman empire in the period of post-revolutionary expansion.<sup>163</sup>

Dimitrie Moruzi, the grand dragoman at the Porte, made contact with the Russian court at St Petersburg in the years preceding the outbreak of war between Russia and the Ottomans in 1806. He assured the tsar of his family's good will towards Russia and began to pass on vital information to the Russian court regarding the Porte's foreign policy. A similarly pro-Russian course was also pursued by Constantin Ipsilanti, the Wallachian ruler, who also communicated details of Ottoman diplomacy to the Russians. French diplomatic pressure at the Porte, however, led to Ipsilanti's fall from power in 1806 and his flight to Russia. Once there,



Ipsilanti requested that the thrones of both principalities should be united under him and promised to supply the Russian army if it invaded the principalities. Unfortunately for Ipsilanti's ambitions, however, Tsar Alexander I had already decided to occupy the principalities, so that Ipsilanti's services were unnecessary.

Russia's invasion of the principalities in 1806 was once again met by considerable support for the Russians within both principalities. In Moldova, a large number of boyars were employed by the Russians in both administrative and military capacities during the six years of occupation.<sup>164</sup> Nevertheless, the Russian occupation put pressure on Russia's supporters in the principalities, as the negative economic effects of the Russian presence became apparent. Russian requisitioning of food supplies in the principalities, together with financial exactions, led to famine in some areas, while the presence of the Russian soldiers gave rise to frequent outbreaks of syphilis and other diseases. By the late summer of 1811 there were severe riots in Bucharest amongst boyars, traders and peasants, all of whom had been adversely affected by the Russian occupation.<sup>165</sup> Nevertheless, it was clear to the politically active boyars that Russia alone offered the Moldovans and Wallachians the best chance of freeing themselves from the Ottomans. Dimitrie Moruzi continued throughout these exchanges to pass secret information on to the court at St Petersburg, despite the suspicions of his Ottoman superiors.

The Russians themselves regarded the occupation of the principalities in 1806 as a prelude to their annexation. Catherine II and Joseph II's 'Greek Project' of 1782 had already envisaged a partition of the Ottoman empire with the principalities, to be renamed 'Dacia', under Russian control. The emperor, however, had drawn back from the project. With Russia's acquisition of a common border with Moldova as a result of the 1792 Treaty of Iași, however, Russian plans to annex the principalities became feasible. Under the terms of the Treaty of Erfurt of 1808 Napoleon and Alexander I agreed to Russia's seizure of the principalities. With this in mind, in 1810 the Russians demanded that the Ottomans should cede to them both Moldova and Wallachia. The Ottoman negotiators intimated that although the return of Wallachia to Ottoman control would be obligatory at the end of the war, they might be prepared to make concessions over the fate of Moldova. The Russians stepped up their contact with the grand dragoman, Dimitrie Moruzi, in the hope that, despite the Ottoman response, he would be able to engineer the annexation of both principalities. The breakdown of relations between Tsar Alexander I and Napoleon, however, forced the Russians to reduce their demands on the Ottomans. Early in 1811 the Russians suggested that they

should only take possession of the Moldovan lands up to the Siret river, but the Ottomans, sensing Russia's weakness, rejected even this proposal. In October, Alexander's fears of a French attack on Russia forced him to sign an armistice with the Turks and to lower his demands still further.

Dimitrie Moruzi, in his capacity as grand dragoman, now hastened the conclusion of a treaty between Russia and the Porte. He feared that in the event of a delay, the French would attack Russia and the tsar's bargaining position would be so weak that his demands on the Ottomans would dwindle to insignificance. Moruzi's diplomatic machinations thus ensured that Russia made a significant territorial gain in the principalities, even if this was not as much as Alexander had originally hoped. Under the Treaty of Bucharest of May 1812, the Russians gained all the lands between the Prut and Dneestr rivers and subsequently named this territory 'Bessarabia', the etymology of which will be discussed below. Moruzi did not survive this Russian victory for long, however. He was rewarded for his treachery towards the sultan with execution.

Under the terms of the Treaty of Bucharest, Russia received over 45,000 km<sup>2</sup> of Moldovan territory between the Prut and Dneestr rivers. The lands ceded to Russia were thus larger in extent than the lands remaining to the truncated Moldovan principality, and included all the Turkish *raia-s*: Hotin, Bender, Akkerman, Chilia, Ismail and Reni, as well as the Bugeac. Russia's new province contained within it some 17 market towns, 685 villages and a population of 482, 630.<sup>166</sup> The Moldovan boyars did not let this truncation of the Moldovan principality go without protest, and sent a number of petitions to the European powers, including one to the Austrian chancellor, Prince Metternich, in Vienna. In particular, the boyars pointed out that the fertile soils between the Prut and Dneestr rivers were of huge economic importance to both Moldova and Wallachia, since they had in the past provided the greatest proportion of the agricultural produce which the principalities were obliged to send to Constantinople.<sup>167</sup>

Although the Russia government had been unable to secure both the principalities during the 1806 to 1812 war, the Treaty of Bucharest assured Russia of a pre-eminent position of influence within the principalities, through the confirmation of the Treaties of Kuchuk Kainardji and Iași, as well as the 1802 convention. Moreover, through her annexation of Bessarabia, Russia gained one of the most important navigable branches of the Lower Danube, the Chilia channel, with the right of free navigation for Russian commercial shipping as far as the mouth of the River Prut. Subsequent treaties gave Russia control of the other main channels on the Danube delta, giving her effective control over Danube navigation: a factor of grave concern to the other European Great Powers.



### *Russia and the Principalities after 1812 and the Growth of French Influence*

Before turning to the effects of Russian administration in Bessarabia in the period up to the First World War (which we will explore below in depth), it is instructive to examine Russia's motives in expanding her influence in the principalities as well as the nature of her relationship with the truncated Moldovan principality and Wallachia in the nineteenth century. This will also serve to cast light on Romania's troubled relationship with the Soviet Union in the twentieth century.

Russia's interests in the principalities from the eighteenth century onwards, had both strategic and ideological motivations. Geographically, the principalities lay on a potential 'Russian road' of territorial expansion into the Balkans and to Constantinople itself. The principalities, with their rich agricultural produce, could either be annexed entirely or serve to provision the Russian army *en route* to the Balkans and beyond.<sup>168</sup> Encroachments on to Ottoman territory by way of the principalities increased during the eighteenth century as the vulnerability of the Ottoman empire was exposed.

The Russians also had important strategic interests in the Black Sea and the Straits. The Ottomans had effectively controlled the Black Sea since their capture of the Crimea in the fifteenth century. They had subsequently closed the Black Sea to foreign shipping, with the periodic exception of Venetian vessels. The Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji of 1774 was thus a major breakthrough for the Russians, since it guaranteed free access to the Black Sea to Russian commercial ships. Russia's position on the Black Sea was also strengthened by her acquisition of the Crimea in 1783. Russia regarded effective domination of the Black Sea and Straits as essential to secure the southern shores of the Russian empire from potential attack and to ensure the export of Ukrainian grain which was a vital component of the Russian economy. Domination of the Black Sea and Straits would also allow Russia the preponderant influence over the ailing Ottoman empire and the possibility of competing with the other European powers as far afield as the Mediterranean or the Near East. Hence, events within the Ottoman territories bordering on the Black Sea and Straits, in other words, the principalities and Bulgarian lands, were of paramount importance to the Russians.<sup>169</sup>

Russian interest in the principalities and the Balkans also had ideological motivations, however. The Russian tsars and foreign policy-makers, espoused a genuine concern for the Orthodox Christian peoples under Moslem domination. As the only Orthodox Christian rulers in

Europe free from Ottoman suzerainty, the tsars took a paternalistic attitude towards their co-religionists under Ottoman domination. They envisaged a new 'Byzantine empire' under Russian control with a mission to expel the Muslim Ottomans from Europe and re-christianize Constantinople. In the nineteenth century, Tsar Nicholas I (reigned 1825–1855), in particular, was greatly inspired by this ideology.

The Russians, moreover, regarded themselves as having a 'civilizing mission' over what they clearly regarded as the more 'backward' peoples of the Balkans and sought to establish a more efficient and representative administration there. Although Nicholas I and subsequent tsars were inspired by autocratic and conservative political principles, Russia in the early nineteenth century, nevertheless, represented a considerable degree of 'progress' for the peoples languishing under Ottoman rule. A case in point is provided by the so-called 'Organic Statutes' which were introduced in the principalities by the Russian governor, Kiselev, in 1834 in an attempt to introduce a degree of constitutionalism and accountability into the running of the principalities. The Statutes, which can be compared with similar reforms introduced into Russian Finland after 1809, provided for a separation of powers in each principality into an executive, headed by a prince, elected for life by an assembly in each principality, with a veto over legislation. The legislature was to consist of an assembly in each principality with law-making powers and control over the budget. Although the Statutes were soon regarded as too conservative and inadequate by Moldovan and Wallachian boyars inspired by Western liberalism, they were, nevertheless, progressive for their time.

Moreover, the Treaty of Adrianople of 1829, the result of yet another Russian military victory over the Turks, was of considerable benefit to the principalities. The treaty not only confirmed earlier treaties whereby Russia had established an effective protectorate over the principalities, but the sultan in addition recognized the administrative autonomy of both Moldova and Wallachia. The Turks also returned to Wallachia the fortresses of Turnu, Giurgiu and Brăila on the Danube and the lands around them that had been seized by the Turks centuries before and administered as *raia*-s. Crucially as well, the treaty annulled the Turkish monopoly on agricultural produce, allowing the principalities to trade freely on the open market. Unfortunately, however, this brought the principalities' own grain exports into direct competition with those from the Russian Ukrainian lands. In retaliation, the Russians manipulated their domination of the Chilia channel and allowed the mouth of the Danube river to silt up which had adverse effects on the trade at the Wallachian river ports of Galați and Brailă.



In addition, the deleterious economic effects of the Russian occupation of 1829 to 1834 did little to endear the Russians to the Moldovans and Wallachians, since its effects were similar to those experienced during the occupation from 1806 to 1812. A further Russian occupation took place from 1848 to 1851. Thomas Thornton, who had visited the principalities in the early years of the century, returned again a few decades later. He lay the blame for the poverty of the principalities at the door of the Russians arguing that the commerce of the principalities had been ruined by the requisitioning of agricultural produce by the Russian army, as well as the frequent unauthorized pillaging which took place.<sup>170</sup> Although Thornton's analysis of the economic problems of the principalities was doubtless somewhat simplistic, the heavy-handed and autocratic Russian administration prompted many of the politically active boyars to question whether replacing Ottoman hegemony with that of Russia really represented an improvement for the principalities.

Russia continued to be supported by many of the conservative land-owning boyars, especially in Moldova, until late into the nineteenth century. There was a high degree of marriage between the boyars and the Russian aristocracy. Gorchakov, the Russian foreign minister during the 1877–1878 Russo-Turkish war, for instance, was connected by marriage to both the Moldovan Sturdza family and the Cantacuzinos. In addition, some of the higher Orthodox clergy with connections to the Russian Orthodox church also tended to remain pro-Russian.<sup>171</sup> By the 1830s and 1840s, however, such groups were no longer as politically significant as the younger generation of boyars educated at Western universities, particularly in Paris.

These young boyars looked to the liberal West rather than to autocratic Russia, as their model for the reorganization of the principalities. They aspired to a secular state based on liberal and constitutional principles which would enshrine the 'rights of man' espoused by the French revolutionaries. To these young minds, it was France which now appeared as the beacon of 'progress' and civilization, while Russia seemed increasingly 'oppressive and reactionary'.<sup>172</sup>

In addition, this generation of boyars had absorbed the ideology of nationalism, both from French sources, and through contact with Herder's nationalist and linguistic ideology circulating in the German universities. These Moldovans and Wallachians now regarded the ethnic nation as the primary focus of individual and communal loyalty and hoped to unite all the Romanian-speakers of the principalities, and even Transylvania, into a common 'Romanian' national state. This, they hoped, would be governed by a foreign prince and thus enable them to throw off the

burdensome Russian protectorate. This stress on the nation and secular liberal values was to sever any residual bonds of loyalty felt towards the Russians based on common Orthodoxy. The educated generation of the 1830s and 1840s regarded the fate of the principalities as being bound up with that of Western Europe and were emotionally drawn to their Latin 'brethren' in France.

Thus, the 1848 revolutions in Wallachia and Moldova had a decidedly pro-French and anti-Russian flavour. The revolutionaries, urged on by émigré groups in Paris, aspired to throw off the Russian protectorate and introduce liberal reforms. Hatred of Russia was enflamed by its military suppression of the revolution and the ensuing occupation of the principalities until 1851. Nevertheless, as a testament to the complexities, and frequent contradictions, of Russia's relations with the Romanian-speaking peoples, Russia's suppression of the Hungarian revolution in 1849, in the short term at least, 'protected the Rumanians [of Transylvania] against Hungarian domination and won the approval of a large section of the Romanian leadership'.<sup>173</sup> The Russian protectorate over the principalities was, in any case, soon brought to an end by Russia's military defeat in the Crimean War.

According to the terms of the 1856 Peace of Paris which ended the Crimean war, Russia was replaced by a protectorate of the seven European Great Powers, which included the Ottoman empire, over the principalities and Serbia. Russia's humiliation was increased by the stipulation which forced her to return to the Moldovan principality the southern areas of Bessarabia, (i.e. the districts of Ismail, Cahul and Bolgrad). The purpose of this, however, was not to reward the Moldovans but to ensure that the Danube delta passed back under effective Turkish suzerainty, thereby preventing Russia from controlling Danube navigation.<sup>174</sup>

Russia's humiliation and her obvious desire to overturn the Peace of Paris and retake southern Bessarabia introduced considerable friction into Russia's relations with the principalities. Increasingly, the Russians focused their attention upon the Balkan Slavs, in particular the Serbs and Bulgarians, as their potential allies against the Ottomans, rather than the inhabitants of the principalities. This did not, however, prevent Russian involvement in the unification of the principalities in the 1860s and 1870s and the creation of the Romanian state.

The Romanian national movement, which had gathered force since the failed revolution of 1848, was backed by France, which saw in it a means of extending French influence in the region. Romanian émigrés in Paris were an important component of this movement, and favoured the



complete removal of Russian influence from the principalities and the installation of a foreign prince on the throne.<sup>175</sup> None of this was pleasing to the Russians and they could not hide their dislike of the French-educated A. I. Cuza, elected as ruler in both Wallachia and Moldova in 1859. The legislative and administrative union of the principalities followed in 1862 and a number of Cuza's subsequent policies, such as the secularization of the monasteries in the principalities, angered the Russians. Cuza's support for the 1863 Polish revolt prompted the Russians to consider Cuza's expulsion from the throne. Fortunately for the Russians, Cuza was overthrown by a coup from within the principalities in 1864. Two years later Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen (a cadet branch of the Prussian royal family) was elected to the throne of the newly created Romanian state as prince, although Romania remained under the protection of the Great Powers. The Russians only grudgingly accepted the prince's election.

Ideally the Russians would have preferred the principalities to remain separate entities under local rulers through whom Russia could continue to exert influence. Thus, by the 1860s Russian thinking was at odds with the vast majority of politically active Romanians who desired complete independence for their new country and, when international conditions proved favourable, the incorporation of the Romanian-speakers of Transylvania into the state. It is worth noting, however, the existence of a significant minority of Moldovans who concurred with the Russian position.

A movement to maintain Moldova's separate status had existed since the end of the Crimean War in 1856 and consisted primarily of large-landowning boyars who had supported the Russian protectorate before the war.<sup>176</sup> These Moldovan boyars feared that in a unified 'Romania', the francophile liberals would dominate and introduce a number of reforms, including the distribution of the largest landed estates amongst the peasantry. They also anticipated the loss of their direct control over the government which would result from the removal of the capital from Iași to Bucharest, and lead, inevitably, to the decline of the ancient Moldovan capital. The fall of A. I. Cuza in February 1864, gave renewed hope to these separatists. This culminated in a demonstration in Iași in April led by pro-Russian boyars in which violence flared and a number of people were killed. Although Russian officials gave only their unofficial support to the demonstration, the Russian foreign minister, Gorchakov, with his family links to the Moldovan boyars, was known to be in favour of Moldova's separation from Wallachia.

Relations between the new Romanian state and Russia continued to worsen. Although the two countries fought together during the 1877–1878

Russo-Turkish war, friction arose over the question of the Russian army's right of passage through Romania and use of Romanian supplies. This issue was enflamed by Romanian memories of previous Russian occupations, and by Alexander I's attempt to annex both the principalities during the 1806–1812 war. This fear of Russian motives in her dealings with Romania and the implications of the Russian army's entry on to Romanian soil, even as an ally, was to dog Romanian-Russian relations well into the twentieth century.

The Romanian declaration of independence in May 1877, confirmed by the 1878 Treaty of Berlin, met with Russian disapproval. The treaty included one significant gain for the Russians, however, since it confirmed that southern Bessarabia, restored to Moldova after the Crimean War, should once again revert to Russia. This left all the former Bessarabian lands between the Prut and Dnestr rivers under Russian control, where they were to remain until the end of the First World War.

Romanian fears of Russian military hegemony in the Black Sea area, and Russia's potential threat to Romania's newly-won independence, seemed reinforced by the emergence of the new Bulgarian state to Romania's south, which was under heavy Russian influence. The threat of overwhelming Russian influence in the area was magnified by France's eclipse as a Great Power, and her effective disappearance from 'the Eastern Question', following her defeat by Prussia in 1870 and the creation of the German empire. These factors led Romania, which had become a kingdom in 1881, to join the Triple Alliance of the Habsburg monarchy, Germany and Italy in 1883, as their ally in any future war against Russia.

In the early nineteenth century, the Moldovans and Wallachians had regarded Russia as a representative of order and progress; a marked contrast to the apparent corruption and maladministration of the Ottomans. By the late nineteenth century, 'Rumania, united under French patronage by Paris educated liberals, preferred to regard itself as an outpost of French civilization on the Danube'.<sup>177</sup> This attitude was given concrete expression in the decision to replace the Old Church Slavonic script with the Latin alphabet in 1862 and the infusion of the Romanian language with vocabulary of French origin.

While it may be true that '... Russia had very little to offer the Balkan states once they were liberated from Ottoman control', Russia's military contribution to Romanian independence should not be dismissed.<sup>178</sup> It was Russia's many wars against the Turks in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and their protection of the Orthodox peoples of the Balkans which enabled the Romanians, as well as the Greeks, Serbs and



Bulgarians, to secure greater autonomy, and eventually independence, from the Turks. Moreover, Russia's motives in her relations with the principalities were not always self-serving, since many of the Russians felt a genuine desire to help fellow-Christians under Ottoman domination and to introduce more responsible and efficient government into the principalities and other Balkan lands.

Moreover, it is a paradox that in regarding themselves as an 'outpost of French civilization on the Danube', and attempting to emulate France and other Western countries, the Romanians were to find themselves very much on the 'periphery' of European events, forever conscious of their political, economic and cultural shortcomings in relation to the more powerful Western nations. In reality the Romanians shared few close historic bonds, political traditions or similarities in social and economic structure with the Western countries. The introduction of French cultural influences into the principalities was to be responsible for important discontinuities in Romanian history. In turning decisively away from their Orthodox East Slav neighbours, with whom they had lived in political and religious symbiosis for over a thousand years, the Romanians, particularly those of Moldova, ceased to be at the geographic and cultural heartland of the Orthodox world and made themselves 'a Latin island in a sea of Slavs'.

### *Bessarabia Under Russian Rule, 1812–1918*

Let us now turn to the history of the lands between the Prut and Dnestr rivers between their annexation by Russia under the 1812 Treaty of Bucharest and their incorporation into the Romanian state in 1918. The territory ceded to the Russians under the terms of the treaty was called Bessarabia by its new rulers. This term, which has been adopted in most textbooks, was, however, at the time not strictly accurate. 'Bessarabia' (Romanian *Basarabia*) originally only referred loosely to the lands between the Danube and Dnestr rivers on the Black Sea coast which had been conquered from the Tatars and incorporated within the principality of Wallachia during the reign of Mircea the Old (1386–1418). These lands were subsequently absorbed into the principality of Moldova in the fifteenth century.<sup>179</sup> By the late sixteenth century, the application of the name 'Bessarabia' had been extended to describe not only the lands running between the Danube and Dnestr rivers, but also the Bugeac region inhabited by the Tatars. Dimitrie Cantemir thus frequently refers to Bessarabia in his *Descriptio Moldaviae* written in the early eighteenth century. Cantemir specifically recorded that Bessarabia consisted of

four regions: the Bugeac, together with Akkerman on the Dnestr and Chilia and Ismail on the Danube. Cantemir believed the name 'Bessarabia' was derived from a tribe, the 'Besi,' who had dwelt in the region in remote antiquity.<sup>180</sup> More plausibly, however, the term is derived from the name of the founder of the Wallachian principality, Basarab I, who also gave his name to the ruling Wallachian dynasty, the house of Basarab, to which Mircea the Old belonged. The association of 'Bessarabia' with Wallachia is borne out by the fact that medieval and early modern maps of the Wallachian principality are frequently labelled 'Bessarabia' and by the frequent description of Wallachia as the *terra Basarabiae*. The name 'Basarab' itself is of Turkic, probably Cuman, origin.<sup>181</sup>

It will be remembered that many pro-Russian Moldovans and Wallachians had supported the Russians during the occupation of the principalities between 1806 and 1812. In Moldova, many boyars had been employed at this time in both the Russian administration and army. Following Russia's formal annexation of Bessarabia under the Treaty of Bucharest in May 1812, many pro-Russian families from the principalities crossed to the east of the River Prut with the Russians. There they received grants of land from the Russian authorities, together with the right to take part in the government of the new province. Amongst these pro-Russians were representatives of some of the most important families in the principalities, such as the Sturdzas, an old Moldvan boyar family, as well as the Ghica and Cantacuzino 'Phanariot' families, and representatives of many lesser boyar families. By 1821, a quarter of all boyars in Bessarabia had close Russian connections. They had either been partisans of pro-Russian princes in the principalities during the previous decades, seen service in the Russian army during the Russo-Turkish wars, or lived in Russia after 1792.<sup>182</sup> It was from amongst these pro-Russian boyars that the administrators of post-1812 Bessarabia were drawn.

The first civil governor of Bessarabia was the octogenarian Scarlat Sturdza who had served the Russian empress, Catherine II, during the 1787 to 1792 war. Sturdza had subsequently received a grant of land in the Russian territories east of the Dnestr river and thereafter became a general in the Russian army. Sturdza's deputy was a member of the Krupenski boyar family who were to wield great influence in Bessarabia and who remained steadfastly loyal to the Russians. Sturdza, as it turned out, died only one year after taking up his position. He was the sole 'native' governor in the 106 years of Russian rule in Bessarabia. The Russian military governor, General Garting, now took overall charge of civil, judicial and military affairs until 1816.



For the sixteen years from 1812 to 1828, Bessarabia enjoyed a period of autonomy.<sup>183</sup> Immediately following the annexation, the province's inhabitants were exempt from any taxation for three years by the Russians, as well as from military service. The Russians approved the continued use of the traditional Moldovan laws, customs and administrative system within the province, which essentially left the native boyars in a dominant position. Provision was made for the use of both Romanian and Russian as the languages of administration and justice. The Russian governor, Garting, sincerely wished to reform the administration of Bessarabia, recognizing that the traditional forms of government in the principalities during the Phanariot era had been both chaotic and frequently oppressive of large sections of the population. Mindful of Russia's wider foreign-policy aims, Garting believed that without reform the 'Russian promise of being able to govern on behalf of Balkan Orthodox Christians would never again be believed'.<sup>184</sup> Garting's attempts at reform, however, were to come to nothing, since the boyars reverted to their usual ploy of petitioning the tsar in support of their 'traditional rights'.

Continued use of Moldovan laws and customs and the use of the Romanian language were confirmed in the 1818 statute which accorded Bessarabia the highest degree of autonomy anywhere in the empire. The boyars dominated Bessarabia's supreme council which effectively allowed them to remain entrenched within the province's legal, administrative and financial systems. In addition, the statute confirmed the privileges of the region's various corporate groups. Indeed, the boyars' privileges were extended by the elevation of all boyars to the rank of noble, which meant that they were exempt from paying any taxation. The highest nobles alone, however, could pass on their title to their successors, and enter into the ranks of the Russian imperial nobility. The rights and privileges of the church were also confirmed, including the right to tithes and exemptions from taxes on their lands. The church thereby retained its position as one of the province's most important landowners.

The rights of various distinct communities further down the social scale were also confirmed by the 1818 statute. These were the relics of groups which had previously been granted special status and privileges, although some of their rights clearly had a customary origin. The so-called *mazâli* claimed historic descent from the lower nobility and were as such eligible to hold a limited number of state posts, which would otherwise be the sole preserve of the nobles. In addition, they could buy and sell land and paid less tax than the peasantry. The *mazâli* also had their own form of self-government under a captain appointed by the community. The *ruptași*, on

the other hand, claimed descent from the clergy or foreign colonists. Although subject to taxation and labour services, these were less onerous than those imposed on the peasantry. The *răzeși*, however, were free peasants who were organized into village communities with joint ownership over their land. Traditionally, the *răzeși* had performed military duties for the prince in return for their land. All these groups were confirmed in their rights under the statute.<sup>185</sup>

The personal freedom of Bessarabia's peasant majority (the *țărani*) was also assured under the 1818 statute. It will be remembered that the peasants owed their freedom to Constantin Mavrocordat's abolition of serfdom in the principalities in the 1740s. The Russian annexation of Bessarabia, however, had led to rumours that serfdom would be reimposed, and led to large numbers of peasants fleeing the province. The Russians, however, extended freedom from serfdom to all new colonists to Bessarabia, (a point to which we shall return). Despite their legal freedom, however, the Bessarabian peasants were discouraged from moving. They often had to perform labour services for their landlords under the contracts of indenture which they took out. Moreover, it was the peasants who continued to bear the brunt of the tax-farming system and who were also obliged to pay for the costs of upkeep of the local law courts, the postal system, roads and bridges, as well as paying a tax on all saleable articles and on their agricultural produce. In other words, Bessarabia retained much of the social and economic system inherited from the Phanariot era, with similar consequences. It was not unusual for the peasants to refuse to grow crops, knowing all too well that they would see little, if any, of the profits, or to flee the province entirely.

With little change in Bessarabia's social and economic conditions in the first sixteen years after the Russian annexation, it is perhaps not surprising that the province retained an 'oriental' appearance. When Tsar Alexander I visited Bessarabia in 1818, he was apparently 'astonished to find the Christian nobles dressed in elaborate Turkish gowns rather than jackets and breeches'.<sup>186</sup> The Russian vice-governor, F. F. Vigel, who served in the province from 1819 to 1826 was likewise surprised to see bearded and begowned boyars reminiscent of those who had so angered Peter the Great in Russia itself a century earlier. Doubtless such sights reinforced Vigel's sense of modern Russia's 'civilizing mission' in the region.<sup>187</sup>

One might wonder, therefore, why the Russians allowed this state of affairs to prevail until 1828. This was in large measure due to Russia's weakness and lack of manpower in the wake of Napoleon's invasion of Russia, which forced the Russians to rely on the local boyars who were already entrenched in the administration in Bessarabia. The continuation



of autonomy in the province also owed something to Tsar Alexander I's policy of extending special status to certain outlying areas of the empire. Also crucial to Bessarabia's autonomy, however, was the presence amongst those who crossed the River Prut into Bessarabia with the Russians in 1812 of the churchman Gavril Bănulescu-Bodoni, who was of Moldovan origin, but deeply russophile.

Bodoni provides us with a fine late example of the itinerant Orthodox clergyman, albeit that the Orthodox Christian world in Eastern Europe was by now oriented at least as much towards the Russian church as towards Constantinople. Part of Bodoni's education had taken place in Kiev, as well as in Moldova itself. In 1799 he visited Constantinople and in subsequent years he taught philosophy at the seminary in Poltava in Russian Ukraine. In 1789, during the Russian occupation of the principalities, the Russians installed Bodoni as bishop of Akkerman, which lay at the heart of one of the Turkish *raia*-s. At the end of the war in 1792, when the Turks were reinstalled in Akkerman, Bodoni retired to Russia and was appointed metropolitan of Cherson and the Crimea. In 1799 he became metropolitan of Kiev. When Russia occupied the principalities once more in 1806, Bodoni became head of the church in both principalities. The formal annexation of Bessarabia in 1812, however, cut the lands east of the Prut off from the metropolitanate of Moldova in which they had been incorporated since the medieval period. In 1813 Alexander I created the eparchy of Chişinău and Hotin, which covered the area of the Russian empire extending from Bessarabia's western border on the Prut to the River Bug. Gavril Bănulescu-Bodoni was the natural choice as metropolitan, a position he held until his death in 1821. It was Bodoni who effectively acted as the 'mouthpiece' for the Moldovan boyars after 1812, especially after Governor Sturdza's death in 1813. His high standing with the Russians helped ensure that the statute of 1818 gave Bessarabia a high degree of autonomy, as well as ensuring that Romanian achieved the status of an official language.

Russia's colonization policy in the nineteenth century, however, was to have profound implications for the ethnic composition of Bessarabia, which was in 1812 still overwhelmingly Romanian-speaking. According to a Russian census of 1817, the Bessarabian population was 482,630 of which 86% were Moldovan (that is to say, Romanian-speaking). With regard to the term 'Moldovan' used here, we should note that Russian ethnographers in the nineteenth century recognized the cultural and linguistic affinities between the Romanian-speaking populations on both sides of the River Prut. As Charles King has pointed out, while 'imperial censuses used the term 'Moldovan' to describe Bessarabia's majority population . . . this

term was the self-designation of the population, not an invention of the Russians'.<sup>188</sup> In addition, the Bessarabian population included some 30,000 Ruthenes (6.5% of the total population), who were long-established in the province, as well as 19,130 Jews amounting to 4.2% of the population.<sup>189</sup> In addition, there were small populations of Greeks, Armenians, Germans, Gypsies and Bulgarians, together with a few thousand so-called 'Lipovans', the descendents of the 'Old Believers' who had left Russia during the reign of Peter the Great.

At the time of Bessarabia's formal annexation by Russia, the province was one of the most sparsely populated areas of the Russian empire. This was partly due to the flight, to Wallachia and elsewhere, of possibly as many as one-third of the population of the lands between the Prut and Dneestr rivers during the Russian occupation. General Kiselev, who later became governor of the principalities, apparently declared with reference to the occupation of 1806 to 1812, that, 'the inhabitants fled out of Bessarabia, preferring the Turkish regime, hard though it was, to our own'.<sup>190</sup> While this flight was doubtless in part motivated by the economic burden of supplying the Russian army, some of the peasantry fled in the fear, false as it turned out, that the Russians would re-impose serfdom. The spread of disease, including several outbreaks of the plague at the end of the war and in the following decade, also led to a reduction of the population of Bessarabia and the principalities.

The Bessarabian population was also reduced by the expulsion, during the 1806–1812 war, of the Tatars, together with most of the Turks, living in the Bugeac and the Turkish *raia-s* of Bender, Chilia and Akkerman. The Russians feared that these groups would hardly be well-disposed towards them and would 'stab them in the back' as the army advanced into the Balkans. Through the occupation of Moldova, all areas inhabited by the Tatars were now under Russian control and the Bugeac Tatars were moved to the Crimea where the Russian government was now settling its Tatar population. Through their colonization policies, the Russians sought in particular to repopulate the Bugeac and the *raia-s* of Bessarabia.

Russian motives for this colonization policy were closely linked to Russia's foreign-policy aims in the Balkans. First, a well-populated and prosperous Bessarabia could act as a 'show-case' to advertize the benefits of Russian administration to the Ottoman Empire's Orthodox subjects over whom Russia claimed to act as a protector. Secondly, it was necessary for Russia to build up the agricultural and economic resources of the province which was now Russia's frontier zone with the Ottoman empire and the territorial base from which future military campaigns against the Turks would be launched. Furthermore, as a Moldovan historian has



recently argued, it may well be that the Russian government specifically sought to change the balance of nationalities in the province, especially in southern Bessarabia, against the indigenous Moldovan population, and replace it with groups that could be expected to be more loyal to Russia. The prohibition on Moldovans migrating from other areas of Bessarabia to the south, is in this respect suggestive.<sup>191</sup> In particular, the Russian government may have wished to place southern Bessarabia in more loyal hands since it bordered the Black Sea and the River Danube, both of which were essential to Russia's broader economic- and foreign-policy aims in the region.

The movement of peoples into southern Bessarabia began even before the end of the war. By 1812 there were already some 11,000 new settlers in the area. Although some were Romanian-speakers from the Dobruja, most were Russians, who entered the province in an administrative or military capacity and who were given land, as well as Ukrainians who entered Bessarabia from Russian Ukraine.<sup>192</sup> In the aftermath of the war, the Russian government encouraged more colonists to settle in Bessarabia, and especially in the depopulated southern areas, by offering generous land grants and financial aid. Peasant migration from other parts of the Russian empire was encouraged through the prohibition on serfdom in Bessarabia. In 1824, Russian state peasants were enticed into moving into the province by promises of land and tax exemptions. The prohibition on serfdom also made the area attractive to escaped Russian serfs, religious schismatics and even fugitives from the law who sought to take advantage of the relative freedom which existed in Bessarabia. Russian and Ukrainian migration into Bessarabia was encouraged throughout the nineteenth century. By 1858 the Ukrainians, with whom the long-standing Ruthene population was now numbered, represented some 13.1% of the population with 120,000 people, and 19.6% of the population by 1897 with 379,698 people. The Russians numbered 20,000 inhabitants by 1858, 2.1% of the population, and 155,774, 8% of the total population, by 1897.<sup>193</sup>

Southern Bessarabia also became the home to many Bulgarian settlers. Some, as we have seen, had already settled in the Bugeac during the 1806–1812 war, where they replaced the Tatars and Turks expelled by the Russians. Bulgarians had been entering the principalities since the mid-eighteenth century, however, under the protection of the Russian army during periods of occupation. More waves of Bulgarian migration into southern Bessarabia followed after 1817, as well as those of another ethnic group, the Gagauz, a Turkic people of Orthodox Christian faith, and continued up until the 1870s.<sup>194</sup> Bulgarian migration into Russian-

controlled Bessarabia was especially motivated by their regard for Russia as 'the defender of Orthodoxy' in the Balkans.<sup>195</sup> The privileges granted to the Bulgarian settlers included freedom from serfdom and exemption for ten years from taxation and from military service.

A numerically small but economically important group of migrants to Bessarabia were the Germans. The principality of Moldova had lost a significant part of its long-standing German population, which had been integral to the foundation of the principality in the medieval period, through the loss of Bukovina to the Habsburg monarchy in 1775. New German colonists were encouraged to move to southern Bessarabia, especially from 1814 to 1824. Most of these settlers came from Prussian Poland, Mecklenburg, Pommerania and West Prussia, with groups of settlers also coming from the southern German lands, notably Württemberg.<sup>196</sup> In addition to the incentive of leaving territories ravaged by the Napoleonic wars and ensuing famines, the Germans were tempted into Bessarabia by offers of land, religious freedom, exemption from taxation for a full fifty years, as well as loans and the use of peasant labour to build their homes. 94% of the Bessarabian German community were Lutheran, with 80% of the population engaged in agriculture, through which the community was virtually self-sufficient. A few hundred French and Swiss colonists also arrived in the 1820s at the same time as the Germans, giving rise to such unlikely village names as Paris, Brienne and Frèrechampenoise in southern Bessarabia. Although the German population was barely 10,000 strong even as late as 1827, numbers had risen to over 60,000 by 1897, or 3.1% of the overall Bessarabian population.<sup>197</sup> A French traveller in Bessarabia in 1919, Professor de Martonne, recorded his impressions of the German villages built mainly between 1816 and 1828 in the south of the province. Many of these, such as the village of Leipzig, were named in honour of German victories against the French in the Napoleonic War. De Martonne was impressed by the orderliness of the German villages, with their fine buildings, and by the well-cultivated lands surrounding them. In the German villages, he wrote, 'you gain . . . a vivid impression of prosperity and even wealth, as well as of order and method. In the whole extent of the German colonies, I have not seen a patch of ground lying waste'. De Martonne described the Germans as 'an aristocracy of hard-headed landowners', and particularly praised their excellence in the breeding of fine horses and cattle.<sup>198</sup> By the interwar period, the German population had also developed a small but efficient industrial sector which included eight factories for making agricultural machinery, seven cloth factories, 37 brickworks and 91 dairies.



Unlike the Germans present in Moldova in previous centuries, however, Bessarabia's German colonists were not primarily engaged in trade and industry. This was left overwhelmingly to the Jews. These were to be found throughout Bessarabia in the nineteenth century, but were overwhelmingly urbanized. This pattern of settlement was intensified by the Russian regulation of 1882 which prohibited Jews from settling outside towns and cities. Most of the province's small commercial and industrial sector was in Jewish hands. The Jews already living in Bessarabia in 1812 had migrated from Polish and German territories in the Middle Ages and were Yiddish speaking.<sup>199</sup> In the decades after 1812, Jewish migrants came mainly from Russian territories in Poland, Ukraine and the Crimea, tempted in particular by the fact that they were, initially at least, exempt in Bessarabia from the discriminatory legislation which applied elsewhere in the Russian empire. The Jewish population of the province thus rose from just under 20,000 in 1817 to 78,750 in 1858 (8.6% of the total population) and 228,168 (11.8% of the population) in 1897. Chişinău, which supplanted Tighina as Bessarabia's capital in 1818, had witnessed Jewish immigration since the eighteenth century and hence by 1897 some 50 per cent of the city's population was Jewish, and Russian-speaking, and almost all the capital's factories were in Jewish hands. The city did not avoid the growing anti-semitic violence of late tsarist Russia and witnessed vicious pogroms in 1903 and 1905.<sup>200</sup>

Russia's colonization policy transformed Bessarabia into a highly ethnically-diverse province. According to the Russian census of 1897, the Bessarabian population was just under two million, of which only 47.6% identified themselves as Moldovan, Ukrainians made up 19.6% of the population, with the Jews at 11.8% and the Russians at 8%. Smaller ethnic groups making up the rest of the population, including the Germans at 3.1% of the overall population, Bulgarians at 5.3%, Turks, including the Gagauz, at 2.9% and Gypsies at 0.4% of the total population. While still the largest single ethnic group in Bessarabia, the statistics of 1897 represented a significant fall in the Moldovan population of the province, which had stood at some 66.4% of the total population even as recently as 1858. Moreover, the Moldovans, together with the Ukrainians, made up the bulk of the province's rural population. Only some 14% of Bessarabia's urban population was made up of Romanian-speaking Moldovans even as late as 1897.<sup>201</sup>

Moreover, while the Moldovans formed the majority of the population in the central area of Bessarabia, national 'minorities' outnumbered them in the north and south. Hence in the Hotin region on the Upper Dnestr, some 53.3% of the population were Ukrainian and only 23.8% Moldovan.

South Bessarabia showed even greater disparities of population between the indigenous Moldovans and more recent colonists, especially in and around the former Turkish *raia*-s. Chilia, for example, which had been some 92% Moldovan in 1806, was only 12.7% Moldovan by 1844. Ismail, which was 85% Moldovan in 1809, had a Moldovan population of only 6.2% in 1884.<sup>202</sup> In Cetatea Albă (Akkerman), the Moldovan population was only some 16.4% of the population by the end of the century, with Ukrainians and Russians making up over 35% of the population.<sup>203</sup>

The Moldovan population of Bessarabia was affected not only by Russia's policy of colonization in the nineteenth century, but also by the policy of centralization and russification which followed Bessarabia's loss of autonomy in 1828. The withdrawal of autonomy was brought about by a number of factors, including the death of the reliably pro-Russian metropolitan, Gavril Bănulescu-Bodoni, in 1821. In addition, the Greek revolt and Tudor Vladimirescu's anti-Phanariot rebellion which broke out in the principalities in 1821 made Russia's position in the region unstable and prompted the Russians to reduce Bessarabia's autonomy in favour of more direct control.<sup>204</sup> To make matters worse, a new war broke out between Russia and the Ottoman empire in 1828 and Russia once again occupied Wallachia and what remained of the principality of Moldova. The logistics of war required Bessarabia to be both efficiently run and economically productive if it was to sustain Russia's war-effort.<sup>205</sup> Such a condition appeared unlikely, however, if the province continued to be run by the local nobility. The Russian governor of Bessarabia, Vorontsov, who took up his post in 1823, was apparently appalled at the state of the province. He discovered Bessarabia's roads and bridges to be largely in ruins, its policing compromised by corruption, and the iniquitous tax-farming system to be impoverishing the peasantry. These woeful conditions, coupled with the death of Alexander I in 1825 and the accession of the more autocratically-minded Nicholas I, inclined the government towards a policy of increasing the powers of the Russian central government over Bessarabia.

Under the statute of 1828, therefore, the power of the local nobility within the Bessarabian council and over the local law courts were greatly reduced. The Russian governor-general was given substantial powers over the council, as well as the courts, and over the province's financial and administrative affairs. Nevertheless, some concessions to local conditions were still made. Russian did not become the sole language of administration until 1833 and the privileges of the various social groups outlined in the 1818 statute of autonomy were maintained. Bessarabia remained free from serfdom and military service was not imposed until 1874. Local



laws prevailed, unless their insufficiency made the use of Russian law necessary. Nevertheless, Russia ruled directly in Bessarabia after 1828 as she had not done previously. In particular, in the three southernmost districts of Bessarabia, where the Moldovan population (that is to say, the Romanian-speakers) were not in a majority, all business was to be conducted in Russian and Russian law prevailed. Bessarabia's effective incorporation into the Russian empire from 1828 meant the province was able to benefit from the liberal reforms of Alexander II in the 1860s, such as the institution of equality before the law, agrarian reforms and the introduction, at least on paper, of primary and secondary education. From 1828, however, Bessarabia, like other parts of the Russian empire, was also subject to the tsarist governments' russification policies. The effect of these policies on Bessarabia's intimately connected religious, educational and cultural life is immensely important to the whole question of Moldovan 'identity'.

During the metropolitanate of Gavril Bănulescu-Bodoni from 1812 to 1821, the Romanian language had flourished in Bessarabia. In 1813 Bodoni opened a press and a seminary in Chişinău, where both Romanian and Russian were taught. Through the press, Bodoni was responsible for the translation and publication of a number of religious works from Russian into Romanian. These included a catechism and a Russian grammar with Romanian parallel text for use at the seminary. In addition, Bodoni was responsible for the publication, in St Petersburg, of a New Testament in Romanian (1817) and the complete Bible (1819), the latter under the auspices of the British and Foreign Bible Society.<sup>206</sup> By the time of his death in 1821, Bodoni's press had published some 19,320 copies of books.<sup>207</sup>

Bodoni's successor as head of the church in Bessarabia was Dimitrie Sulima who, despite being of Ukrainian origin, knew the Romanian language and continued Bodoni's work of translations from Russian texts into Romanian. These included his *Instrucţia Bisericii* ('Instructions of the Church') in 1827. He also published a Romanian-Russian primer in 1822 and was responsible for setting up a number of elementary schools. In 1823 a school was opened in Chişinău to prepare boys for the seminary previously established by Bodoni. A church-run school for the daughters of priests and teachers was subsequently opened in the capital in 1859.<sup>208</sup>

Despite the extensive use of Romanian under Gavril Bănulescu-Bodoni and Dimitrie Sulima, however, the loss of autonomy in 1828 served to limit the use of the language in Bessarabia. From 1833 Romanian was no longer an administrative language or language of instruction in schools. In 1854 Russian became Bessarabia's sole official language and thereafter

Romanian was quickly eradicated from the school system. By 1867 there were no schools in Bessarabia which taught in the Romanian language.<sup>209</sup> In the second half of the century, the education system expanded beyond its original core of ecclesiastical schools and those established by the Moldovan princes prior to the annexation of Bessarabia by Russia. By 1912 there were some 1,709 primary schools, over a thousand of which had been set up by the government, while the rest were run by the ecclesiastical authorities. Not one, however, taught in Romanian. Likewise, of Bessarabia's 56 secondary schools in 1912, none taught in Romanian. Paradoxically, it was the Russian lycée, opened in 1833 in Chişinău, which allowed pupils the opportunity to learn Romanian, until a halt was called to this in 1873.<sup>210</sup> The only other important exception to this russification of the school system was in the three southern districts of Bessarabia, Ismail, Cahul and Bolgrad, which were returned to the jurisdiction of the principalities at the end of the Crimean war in 1856. Despite the fact that Romanian-speakers were not in the majority in this part of Bessarabia, the new Romanian administration opened a number of schools and churches, operating in Romanian, as well as a seminary in Ismail. In addition, the Romanians introduced the Latin alphabet in these districts, (a point to which we shall return). Unfortunately for the Romanians, however, the districts were returned to Russia under the 1878 Treaty of Berlin and the Russians reversed these reforms.<sup>211</sup>

The effects of this russification of the education system had various outcomes on different sections of the Moldovan population. The policy was successful with regard to the nobility and to most of the small Moldovan intelligentsia and middle class. As Romanian disappeared as the language of education and administration, wealthy and well-connected young Moldovans went from Russian high schools to imperial universities. Russian, rather than Romanian, became the language of the educated and cultured: a circumstance that remained largely unchanged during the interwar period.<sup>212</sup> The vast majority of the Romanian-speaking autochthonous noble class disappeared during the course of the nineteenth century. Their ranks were increasingly 'diluted' by an influx of non-Romanian-speaking ennobled families from outside Bessarabia, particularly Russians who had held state office in Bessarabia, together with Greeks, Armenians and Poles. The common language of these nobles was Russian and thus their assimilation into Russian culture was assured.<sup>213</sup>

As far as the Moldovan peasantry was concerned, however, russification of schooling had little impact, except in increasing their ignorance. The Russian school-system passed most peasants by, primarily due to the government's inability to supply a sufficient number of Russian-speaking



teachers. Under Tsar Alexander II's educational reforms, the church was expected to establish schools in every parish. An impressive 400 schools with 7,000 pupils were functioning in rural parishes in Bessarabia in the mid-1860s, but only 23 remained by 1880. This was due to the fact that village priests, who usually also acted as the village teachers, were largely ignorant of Russian. An attempt to revive the system in 1884 failed for the same reason.<sup>214</sup> Charles Upson Clark's comment that the Russian education system 'resulted not in acquisition of Russian by the Moldavians, but in their almost complete illiteracy in any language', is borne out by Russian statistics of 1897. These revealed that only 10.5% of all Moldovan men were literate, and a mere 1.7% of all women. The Moldovans, together with the Gypsies, shared the honour of being the least literate groups in Bessarabia, with the Germans emerging as the most literate.<sup>215</sup> Nicolae Iorga also noted a further defect of the school system which negated the attempts to russify the Moldovan rural population. Even those children enrolled at a school were only required to attend for three years, while the school 'year' itself was limited to only a few months during the winter.<sup>216</sup> This was barely enough time to acquire more than a rudimentary knowledge of Russian.

The Russian government's attempts to russify the church in Bessarabia met with similarly mixed results. Following the death of Gavril Bănulescu-Bodoni in 1821, the spiritual head of the church in Bessarabia was demoted from metropolitan status to that of a mere archbishop and no Moldovan was appointed to the position after the death of Bodoni. Following the death of Dimitrie Sulima in 1844, the new archbishop, Irinarh Popov (1844–1858), sought to ensure that all higher administrative and spiritual positions in the church in Bessarabia were occupied by Russians, brought into the province for that purpose. Some of the larger parishes in Bessarabia were also forced to install Russian priests in their churches. In 1870 worship in the Romanian language was officially banned and, between 1871 and 1882, a further period of intense russification of the church was undertaken by Archbishop Pavel Lebedev. Russian became the language of the liturgy and even the Romanian hymnal was discarded for a Russian one. From 1875 Russian-language schools were established in Bessarabia's monasteries. In 1878, following the return of the southern Bessarabian districts of Ismail, Cahul and Bolgrad from Romania to Bessarabia, Lebedev obliged all the Romanian-speaking priests to learn Russian or to lose their parishes. Archbishop Lebedev closed the Romanian seminary at Ismail and forbade the use of Romanian at the Chişinău seminary. He was also responsible for the closure of some 336 Moldovan churches because their priests could not conduct services in Russian.<sup>217</sup>

Archbishop Pavel, however, came up against the same problem as the russifiers of the education system. He was unable to find enough Russian-speaking priests for Bessarabia's churches. Consequently hundreds of churches remained entirely without spiritual heads, while others simply ignored his orders. Of Bessarabia's churches, 207 held their services in Romanian, 211 in Romanian and Russian and 608 continued to use Old Church Slavonic, a language which had long since died out in the Orthodox churches west of the Prut. Of the province's eighteen monasteries, thirteen continued to hold divine offices only in Romanian.<sup>218</sup> Since the great bulk of the Moldovan peasantry remained ignorant of both Russian and, needless to say, of Old Church Slavonic, the results of Pavel's measures was to sink many of them into religious ignorance and apathy. A story circulating in Bessarabia at the turn of the century, tells of a Ruthenian priest in a Moldovan village, who discovered, after commencing his service, that he had forgotten his prayer-book. Undaunted, the priest recited from memory a famous poem by a Ruthenian poet, 'to the entire satisfaction of his hearers, who understood not a word, either of the Church Slavonic or any dialect of Russian'.<sup>219</sup> Moreover, the policy of russification undoubtedly affected the quality of the clergy both at the higher, as well as at the village, level. Knowledge of Russian and acquiescence to the Russian regime were now considered more important than spiritual qualities. Sergei Urussov, who became governor of Bessarabia in 1903, was sufficiently unimpressed with the bishop of Chişinău to conclude that he 'seemed to have none of the qualities of a spiritual pastor and minister of the Gospel'.<sup>220</sup>

It was perhaps not altogether surprising, therefore, that the Moldovan peasants, especially in areas where the liturgy was not conducted in Romanian, were increasingly drawn to religious movements which developed outside the confines of the official church and which were of a more mystical and emotional nature. Many Moldovans were drawn to the cult growing up around Inochentie, a Moldovan monk, from the monastery of Balta, east of the River Dnestr, who preached in Romanian and taught that the end of the world was at hand. He was also reputed to have the power of healing, such that by 1910 the monastery at Balta had apparently become a 'Moldavian Lourdes, with shelters on every side for the invalids brought for [Inochentie's] ministrations'.<sup>221</sup> When the Russian authorities, worried by his popularity, exiled the charismatic monk to a monastery north of St Petersburg, many of his flock simply sold their possessions and followed him there. Inochentie was finally exiled to an island in the White Sea, but his spirit lived on as some of his better-educated followers continued to preach to the 'faithful' in Bessarabia.



The meetings of Inochentie's followers, who were overwhelmingly Moldovan, were based on services in Romanian, led usually by non-priests, and Bible readings, as well as more ecstatic forms of worship. The Russian church authorities, worried by this phenomenon which was taking place entirely outside their control, undertook investigations into the movement. They concluded that the primary cause of the movement's popularity lay in the fact that the church in Bessarabia had become alienated from its flock due to its failure to provide for the Moldovans' spiritual needs in their mother-tongue.<sup>222</sup>

While spoken Romanian clearly survived the onslaught of russification, the printed word in Romanian did not entirely die out either. Although the importation of books from the principalities had been forbidden since 1812, books from Wallachia and Moldova clearly continued to circulate. Moreover, a number of important libraries were located in Bessarabia's monasteries, such as Căpriana. The significance of these in helping to keep the Romanian language alive in the province was recognized by Archbishop Pavel Lebedev who consequently ordered priests to destroy all works in Romanian held in ecclesiastical libraries, although the outcome of his order is unclear.<sup>223</sup> The period between the 1870s and the early twentieth century saw, however, a marked decline in the number of works in Romanian printed in Bessarabia. In 1882 the press set up by Gavril Bănulescu-Bodoni was shut down and, by the end of the century, the public library in Chişinău did not possess a single work in Romanian.<sup>224</sup>

Nevertheless, throughout the 106 years of Russian rule, some printed matter in Romanian continued to be produced by a number of presses in the Bessarabian capital. In particular, the production of leaflets and pamphlets in Romanian was deemed necessary in order to inform the Moldovan population about new laws, to provide information regarding censuses or health matters, or news relating to the imperial family, or foreign affairs. When, for example, the districts of Ismail, Cahul and Bolgrad in southern Bessarabia reverted to Russian rule in 1878, the local population was informed of this by a proclamation written in Romanian in the Latin script.<sup>225</sup> It should be noted, however, that publications printed in the Latin script were exceptional.

In his study of printed works in Bessarabia under Russian rule, Paul Mihailovici lists several hundred works, mainly leaflets and pamphlets, but also books, printed in Romanian. These were written in a variety of scripts. Although the Russian civil alphabet had been introduced in the Russian empire in 1710, a number of alphabets appear to have been in use in nineteenth-century Bessarabia. Mihailovici's study reveals that Old

Church Slavonic was still used to express written Romanian, especially in texts of a religious nature, but also in other documents.<sup>226</sup> Romanian works were also produced in both the 'old' and 'new' Russian alphabets, or even a mixture of the Russian and Old Church Slavonic alphabets.<sup>227</sup> The mixture of alphabets made the Bessarabian population's grasp of letters even harder.

Although the number of printed books in Romanian began to decline after Dimitrie Sulima's death in 1844, a small number of Romanian language manuals were produced thereafter, including one by Iacob Hâncu in 1848. Hâncu went on to teach Romanian at St Petersburg university where the language was taught between 1848 and 1858 and again from 1894 to 1905.<sup>228</sup> Romanian was taught at the university owing to the Russian foreign ministry's need to prepare officials for the judiciary in Bessarabia, for the language of the courts had still necessarily to be conducted in the popular idiom. Moreover, although books from Romania were forbidden in Bessarabia, they were allowed into Russian universities, in particular at Dorpat, Kiev and Odessa, where Moldovan students were often in attendance.<sup>229</sup>

Another important Romanian-language manual was produced by Ioan Doncev in 1865 which, unlike any manual or grammar previously produced, was printed in the Latin alphabet. It was used, briefly, in some Bessarabian schools in 1866 to 1867, the last year in which any Romanian was allowed in Bessarabian schools. Thereafter, however, the book penetrated into Moldovan intellectual circles, where it was used and read right up until the First World War. It was also used at the church-run school for girls in Chişinău where Romanian re-appeared as a subject from 1906 to 1917.<sup>230</sup>

Thus, the written Romanian word continued to retain a presence in Bessarabia, albeit expressed overwhelmingly through the medium of the Church Slavonic and Russian alphabets. Moldovan students at some of the Russian universities were also able to make some contact with Romanian writings from beyond the River Prut through the university libraries. This was sufficient to keep interest in the Romanian language alive. This interest, together with growing apprehensions amongst the clergy in Bessarabia of the effects of linguistic russification in the church, ensured that the Romanian-language question emerged as a major cultural issue during the 1905 revolution in Bessarabia.

During the early years of the twentieth century, the church authorities in Bessarabia agreed to allow greater use of the Romanian language in order to counteract the growing drift amongst the Moldovan peasantry towards religious apathy or religious movements developing outside the



church.<sup>231</sup> The congress of priests even stipulated that village priests should preach in Romanian. The press originally established by Bodoni in Chişinău was reopened and over the next couple of years, in the relatively liberal cultural atmosphere that followed the 1905 revolution, a number of publications in Romanian were produced. These included the religious publication, *Luminătorul* ('The Illuminator'), in 1908. One of the young clergymen who worked for this publication was Gurie Grosu, who became the metropolitan of Bessarabia after the union with Romania in 1918.

Important also to the cultural activity in Bessarabia during and after 1905 were Ion Pelivan and Pantelimon Halippa. These young Moldovans had studied at the university in Dorpat (in present-day Estonia) and had established there an underground Romanian-speaking students' association with links to intellectual circles in Romania. In 1905 its leader, Pelivan, together with Halippa, founded the 'Society for Moldovan National Culture' in Bessarabia and secured funds for a publication entitled *Basarabia* which appeared from 1906 to 1907. This was the province's first Romanian-language journal, written in the Russian alphabet, and it demanded autonomy for Bessarabia within the Russian empire, and the use of Romanian in Bessarabia's schools and administration. We should note, however, that many publications and groups which emerged in Bessarabia at the time of the 1905 revolution were avowedly pro-Russian. Such was the case, for instance, with the weekly publication, *Moldovanul*, edited by Gheorghe Madan, despite its call for 'national awakening'. Other such groups included the 'League of True Russians' and the 'Union of the Russian People'.

Much of the work of the 1905 revolutionary period was, however, undone by the installation of Serafim Chichagov as archbishop in 1908. Serafim returned to the policy of russification of the church and shut down all Romanian presses with the help of the influential and russophile Krupenski family.<sup>232</sup> Nevertheless, the 'Society for Moldovan National Culture' managed to produce another Romanian publication in 1913, *Cuvântul Moldovenesc*, ('The Moldovan Word') which appeared in both the Latin and Russian alphabets.

There are a number of points which should be made relating to the outcome of russification policies in Bessarabia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The overall failure of the attempt to russify the Moldovans was most obvious amongst the peasantry, who continued to use the Romanian language in their daily lives and private worship. A nineteenth century proverb puts it thus: 'a man may die of thirst in Bessarabia if he cannot ask for water in Romanian'. The Moldovans' loyalty to their mother-tongue, however, should not lead us to conclude

that they had a 'Romanian' national consciousness. Apart from the three districts of southern Bessarabia, reunited with the principalities between 1856 and 1878, the Romanian-speaking peasant population east of the River Prut were not part of the Romanian nationalist movement developing in the principalities and Transylvania during the course of the nineteenth century, which created a sense of common identity based on the presumed 'Latinity' of the Romanian language and its speakers' Roman, or Daco-Roman, origins.<sup>233</sup> Moreover, the Moldovan peasantry was not exposed to the Latin alphabet except in the southern Bessarabian districts of Ismail, Cahul and Bolgrad, where a large number of members of other national groups also lived, between 1856 and 1878.

Crucially as well, the russification of the church in Bessarabia, through the elimination of the Romanian language at seminaries and the dismissal of many Romanian-speaking priests, meant that the church as an institution was 'stripped of its potential for Romanian nationalism', which was the role that the church fulfilled in the principalities and Transylvania, under an increasingly 'nationally-conscious' clergy.<sup>234</sup> Moreover, although the linguistic russification of the church in Bessarabia failed, many of the other measures served to bring the Orthodox church in Bessarabia closer to that of Russia. The existence of a distinct 'Bessarabian Orthodoxy' was noted by Romanians from west of the Prut following Bessarabia's union with Romania in 1918. The more elaborate forms of services and priestly vestments, the use of Russian hymns and religious texts of Russian origin (it will be remembered that most of Gavril Bănulescu-Bodoni and Dimitrie Sulima's translations had been from Russian originals), as well as the supposedly distinctive 'religious mentality' of the Moldovans were regarded by many at the time as being closer to the traditions of the Russian Orthodox church than to those of the Romanian Orthodox church.<sup>235</sup>

Furthermore, the introduction of military service amongst the Moldovans in 1874 drew many Moldovans towards a sense of affinity with the Russians. Obligated now to spend seven years, primarily in the Russian far east, exposed to the Russian language and to Russian military culture, it was hardly surprising that many of these recruits returned to their Moldovan villages 'feeling half Russian'.<sup>236</sup> Some certainly developed a loyalty to the Russian imperial family which continued into the interwar period in Bessarabia, to the exasperation of Romanian administrators.

The continued existence of the antiquated social categories whose privileges had been maintained by the Russian government throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, may also have been a factor in preventing the emergence of a strongly-held sense of national identity,



whether 'Moldovan' or 'Romanian'. In the principalities and Transylvania collective identities based on region or privilege were in the process of giving way to a new sense of identity based on a common language. Evidence that these corporate identities, and the privileges that went with them, were still fiercely guarded was revealed in 1905 when Russian attempts to disregard the rights of the *mazâli* were met with a revolt. That these social categories served to divide the Moldovans rather than unite them, is borne out by observations made by John Kaba, a captain in the US army who visited Bessarabia shortly after the union with Romania. Kaba records that the three classes: *mazâli*, *răzeși* and *țărani*, 'while they may be equally poor, or equally rich, or equally illiterate, behave with certain reservation toward each other, and do not usually intermarry'.<sup>237</sup>

If we turn to the small Moldovan middle and intellectual class, however, we do find a number that had developed a 'Romanian' identity, or a strong sense of identification with the Romanians west of the Prut, over the course of the nineteenth century. Amongst these were Ion Pelivan, whose journal *Basarabia* introduced its readers to literary currents from Romania. Amongst other 'pan-Romanianists' we should include Bogdan P. Hasdeu (1838–1907), the philologist, historian and poet who moved to Bucharest from Bessarabia, and whose equally scholarly father had written an 'epistle to the Romanians' to celebrate the union of the principalities in 1859. Constantin Stere (1865–1936) was another influential 'pan-Romanian'. Stere was exiled to Siberia for anti-tsarist activities and in 1892 fled across the Prut to Iași where he became a professor of law and rector of the university. He was responsible for the theory of *poporanism* which sought to place the social and economic problems of the Romanian peasantry, as well as the affirmation of peasant culture, at the heart of the Romanian state's political agenda. Through his publication, *Viața românească*, which began in 1906, he put forward his arguments in favour of land reform, universal suffrage, and constitutional reform. In 1906 he returned temporarily to Chișinău where he was instrumental in helping produce Pelivan's *Basarabia*. Fiercely anti-Russian, Stere was a vital influence in the negotiations leading up to Bessarabia's union with Romania in 1918.<sup>238</sup>

This sense of affinity with the Romanians west of the Prut was by no means universal amongst members of the Moldovan intellectual elite and middle class. It has already been observed that many of these rapidly russified. Those living in the cities with large Russian-speaking populations were often 'russified' through a natural process of assimilation. Moreover, even the development of a Romanian national consciousness

did not necessarily imply a belief in the necessity of Bessarabia's political union with Romania, or a denial of the importance of the Slavs in the 'ethno-genesis' of the Romanians. We have already discussed the importance of Bogdan P. Hasdeu's arguments relating to the partial Slavonic origins of the Romanian people. The Moldovan poet Alexie Mateevici (1888–1917) provides a further illustration. This priest-poet who wrote in Romanian and was part of the Moldovan students' movement at the theological college in Kiev, was very much against any attempts to introduce the Latin alphabet and literary language of Romania into Bessarabia. In a scholarly article of 1910 on the origins of the Romanian language, Mateevici stressed the positive importance of the Slavonic influence on the language. Furthermore, he argued that the annexation of Bessarabia by Russia had been beneficial for the Moldovans since it had allowed them to retain the Old Church Slavonic script, which had disappeared west of the Prut.<sup>239</sup> Such pro-Russian feeling amongst Moldovans was by no means uncommon in the period preceding Bessarabia's union with Romania in 1918. Before turning to the events leading up to the union, however, we will give a short survey of Bessarabia's social and economic position on the eve of the First World War.

In 1900 the Bessarabian economy was still overwhelmingly agricultural. The province's main exports had changed little over the course of centuries and consisted primarily of fruit, vegetables, grain, wine and wool, with some more recent additions such as tobacco. Most of these products were destined for Russia, with wine and grain also exported to other European countries. Only some 30,000 people were employed in the industrial sector, and food-processing accounted for 90% of all industry.<sup>240</sup>

Bessarabia was thus one of the least industrialized areas of the Russian empire, while also possessing one of its highest population densities. By the 1860s all of Bessarabia's open lands had been colonized and as the forests were cut down to make room for the expanding population, the province began to suffer from severe de-forestation. Moreover, the application of the 1868 agricultural statute in Bessarabia, which allowed the transfer of allotments, favoured the creation of larger peasant holdings. As a result of this measure, and of the rapid expansion of the population, by 1905 some 23% of the peasantry were entirely landless. Rural misery was compounded by a lack of agricultural machinery. The American, Captain Kaba, observed in 1919 that methods for working the land were extremely primitive, and what little there had been in the way of machinery had been destroyed by the bolsheviks.<sup>241</sup> Preferring to live in the towns, the landowning nobles had little direct contact with the peasantry, while tension between the latter and the Jewish population was



exacerbated by the leasing of estates by absentee landlords to Jewish middle-men who then sublet to the local peasants.

Chişinău, which had become the Bessarabian capital in 1818 in place of Tighina, also underwent a rapid expansion of population during the century. The town had only some 12,000 inhabitants in 1812 and four years later General Kiselev described Chişinău to Alexander I as 'a large dirty village with only four or five stone houses'.<sup>242</sup> The Bessarabian capital was obviously considered sufficiently remote by the Russians to be granted the honour of acting as Pushkin's place of exile in the early 1820s. By the 1900s, however, the city had obviously undergone a transformation and Governor Urussov observed that Chişinău was a well-laid out city with many elegant buildings. He added, however, that the city lacked an adequate water-supply to sustain a larger population.<sup>243</sup> In the 1860s a canal was built linking Bessarabia to Russia through the Ukrainian lands, together with a telegraph link to Russia. In 1871 the railway line to Odessa was completed. There was no railway link beyond this, however, and the roads remained rudimentary.

A number of Westerners visited Bessarabia just after the union with Romania and were appalled at the state of the province's roads. In southern Bessarabia, in a Bulgarian-inhabited district, the Frenchman, Professor de Martonne, observed that 'on the plateau, skeletons of horses abandoned on the roadside are not a rare occurrence. At a crossroads, two magnificent vultures, busy feeding on a fresh piece of carrion, fly away a few yards from my car'.<sup>244</sup> Captain Kaba commented that Russia's administration of the province was particularly evident in the poor state of the roads, which measured only 350 km. 'In no country in Europe', he wrote, 'have I seen such bad roads as in Basarabia', which are, '... full of holes, four or five yards apart, causing great damage to vehicles and animals. On May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1919, I travelled from Chişinău, by automobile, to Orhei, 45 km distance, and saw four broken down vehicles, and three dying horses. The road is full of dead horse bones.' The railway network too remained primitive, with only some 1050 km of track.<sup>245</sup>

The landowning nobility continued to retain considerable influence over Bessarabian affairs right up to the First World War, despite the introduction of imperial reforms to the province. The memoirs of Sergei Urussov, the last Russian governor of Bessarabia, attest to this. In 1869, for example, the *zemstvo* system of local councils was introduced in the Russian empire, which permitted some local autonomy in areas such as education and public health. The Bessarabian *zemstvo* was regarded by Governor Urussov as generally progressive in its attempts to develop local institutions. In the elections of 1906, however, 'due to the machinations

of various reactionary landlords and corrupt noble families', such as the powerful Krupenskis, the liberal element was ousted and subsequently many of the previous reforms undertaken by the *zemstvo* were revoked, including measures supporting public education.<sup>246</sup> As Charles King has commented, 'greater local control in Bessarabia usually meant greater power for the most reactionary elements . . . A small stratum of nobles . . . exercised firm control over a region far from the imperial capital and far from the eyes of central officials'.<sup>247</sup>

Urussov also recorded high levels of bribery and corruption in the police force despite his efforts to curb these excesses, as well as a thorough-going exploitation of the peasantry by the noble-dominated local administration. The peasants were still forced to bear the costs for the maintenance of the local police, lawyers and gendarmes, even though this practice had generally died out in the rest of Russia. Meanwhile, the local garrison in Chişinău, far from being the bearer of law and order, added to incidents of 'night-larceny, street brawls, and debauchery in nocturnal dives . . .'.<sup>248</sup> The nepotism and corruption of the administration also clearly hampered the development of the Bessarabian economy. Urussov recorded the attempts made by the excise office to undermine the wine-industry in Bessarabia in order to promote the consumption of whisky, which was a government monopoly. Even the 'combined evils' of a lack of skilled workers and the spread of phylloxera, commented Urussov, were not as bad for the wine-industry 'as the noxious activity of the excise office'.<sup>249</sup>

### *Bessarabia and the 1918 Union with Romania*

Romanian historians have traditionally argued that the unification of Bessarabia with Romania was the outcome of the will of the whole population of Bessarabia, which had long seen in the Romanian 'motherland' a saviour from tsarist oppression and had, moreover, never forgotten their Romanian, and Latin, origins. The proliferation of texts to this effect in the interwar period reflects, however, a certain uneasiness amongst Romanian politicians and intellectuals regarding exactly how the province had been acquired in 1918. In particular, the Romanian government had refused to hold a plebiscite in Bessarabia to measure the extent of actual support for union with Romania. Typical is a pamphlet written by Andrei Popovici in 1931 in which he states that ' . . . the hundred years of Russian oppression not only did not suppress the nationalistic sentiments of the population, but, on the contrary, the revolution of 1917



was seized upon by the Bessarabians as an opportunity to shake off the Russian yoke and to return to the mother country from which they were torn off by force a hundred odd years ago . . . Their activity and relentless efforts on behalf of their union with Romania are eloquent proofs of their sentiments which no "plebiscite" can or could ever express better'.<sup>250</sup>

Pro-Romanian writers sought, furthermore, to 'prove' to the outside world the 'Romanianness' of Bessarabia by seeking to diminish the extent of Russian influence in the province. P. Cazacu, writing in 1926, for instance, rather defensively stressed the importance of Roman remains in Bessarabia as evidence that the area 'had begun to take an active part in the life of civilized Western Europe, as far back as the third century of the Christian Era, when Kiev and Moscow had yet hardly begun their existence'. Having recounted the evils of Russian administration in Bessarabia, Cazacu went on to deny 'any ties between the Bessarabians and the Russian State, Russian Culture or the Russian people, in spite of the hundred years of Russian domination here'.<sup>251</sup>

In reality, however, there was no consensus, even amongst Moldovans, let alone the population of Bessarabia as a whole, in favour of union with Romania. Moreover, the acquisition of Bessarabia was of rather less importance to the Romanian government than the annexation of Transylvania and other Romanian-inhabited areas of the Habsburg monarchy. Unification came about largely as a consequence of the international situation in the last year of the First World War, and in particular the events surrounding the Russian revolution and Romania's diplomatic relations with the Central Powers. Unification with Romania thus had relatively little to do with the 'will' of the Bessarabian population.

The Moldovan cultural and political activity which had resulted from the 1905 revolution had been crushed by the russification policies of Archbishop Serafim. It was not until the February revolution in Russia in 1917 that the Moldovans were once again stirred into significant political action. Councils of soldiers soon sprang up, demanding Bessarabian autonomy and the creation of a national assembly, as well as the use of the Romanian language in education and administration. In April 1917 the Moldovan National Party was created out of the 'Society for Moldovan National Culture' which had been founded by Ion Pelivan and Pantelimon Halippa in 1905. The creation of the party, however, was by no means a victory for pan-Romanianism, and cannot be seen as the first step in an inevitable unification with Romania. Indeed, it was not unusual for the party's meetings to be held in Russian. Although some party leaders, such as Ion Pelivan, had spoken of the necessity of union with Romania even before 1917, this was not part of the party's public

platform. Rather, the party programme, elaborated at the party congress in May 1917, envisaged a democratic, federal Russia in which Bessarabia would have autonomy. This would include a legislative assembly based on universal suffrage, and the use of the Romanian language in the administration and education.<sup>252</sup>

One of the leading figures in the creation of the Moldovan National Party, and in drawing up the party programme, was the Transylvanian Romanian, Onisifor Ghibu, who later wrote that in 1916 the Moldovans 'were the most loyal subjects of Nicholas II'.<sup>253</sup> Ghibu had apparently encountered considerable opposition from many party members who resented his stress on the national question at the expense of social issues, and in particular were concerned about the whole question of land reform and the distribution of estates amongst the peasantry. Indeed, in 1917 many Moldovans were preoccupied with social, rather than national, issues. A number of social radicals in the party were not prepared to collaborate with 'class enemies', such as landowners or priests, for the sake of Moldovan ethnic solidarity, let alone Romanian.<sup>254</sup> These even included Ion Pelivan's colleague, Pantelimon Halippa, who informed Ghibu that he was unwilling to establish links with Romanian politicians who he believed would prevent large-scale land reform from taking place in Bessarabia. Halippa, in particular, greatly resented what he described as 'alien' landlords, 'who sustained by the tsarist administration became masters of our land and our exploiters' and was unimpressed by the Romanian government's plans for land reform in Romania put forward in 1917.<sup>255</sup>

Moreover, Moldovan organizations from beyond the borders of Bessarabia had been instrumental in the creation of the Moldovan National Party, especially Moldovans living in Odessa and Kiev. These sought protection of their linguistic and cultural rights within their component states, not unification with Romania.<sup>256</sup> Consequently, it was largely left to Romanians from outside Bessarabia, in particular those from Transylvania and from the Bukovina, to attempt to instil a sense of Romanian nationalism and identity into the Moldovans in 1917 and 1918. In addition to Onisifor Ghibu, these included, the great Transylvanian poet and Romanian nationalist Octavian Goga. The poet's visit to Bessarabia in March 1917, however, did not leave him with a favourable impression of the Moldovans.<sup>257</sup>

We should now examine briefly some of the events during the First World War which led to the Romanian state's involvement with Bessarabia. Prior to the outbreak of the war, there were certainly politicians and intellectuals in Bucharest who regarded Bessarabia as part and parcel



of a future 'Greater Romania'. Many publications put forward Romania's 'right' to Bessarabia on both historic and national grounds. The historian Nicolea Iorga, for instance, did not omit to wield his pen on many occasions in the interests of Romanian claims to the province. In this he followed in the footsteps of the poet, Mihai Eminescu, who had written a series of newspaper articles in 1878, to publicize newly-independent Romania's claims to both Bessarabia and the Bukovina.<sup>258</sup>

Notwithstanding this interest in Bessarabia, however, it was the Romanian-speaking regions of the Habsburg monarchy, Transylvania and the Bukovina, which were the main object of Romanian irredentism before and during the First World War. As a result, despite Romania's adherence to the Triple Alliance of the Habsburg monarchy, Germany and Italy in 1883, the country remained neutral in 1914. The government, headed by the National Liberal politician Ion. I. C. Brătianu, used the period of neutrality to begin laying the diplomatic groundwork for Romania's ultimate intervention on the side of the Entente.<sup>259</sup> Brătianu expected the Entente of Britain, France and Russia eventually to win the war and thus the Entente would advance Romania's claims to Habsburg territories. Brătianu accordingly took no interest in the Central Powers' repeated offers of Bessarabia as the reward for entering the war on their side against Russia and did not enter into serious negotiations over the issue.<sup>260</sup> Finally, in August 1916 the Brătianu government signed military and political conventions with the Entente in which Romania agreed to declare war on the Habsburg monarchy in exchange for a guarantee of the right to self-determination of the Romanians of the monarchy and their subsequent union with Romania. There remained, however, some public figures, such as Alexandru Marghiloman, leader of the opposition Conservative Party, and the anti-Russian Constantin Stere, who had fled from Bessarabia to Romania, who were committed to the cause of the Central Powers, and to Germany in particular. Marghiloman entered into discussions with the Central Powers with regard to a possible reversal of Romania's foreign-policy position in the future. He was promised Bessarabia as a reward for this in the event of the victory of the Central Power over Russia.<sup>261</sup>

As a result of Romania's uneven military performance in 1916, however, some two-thirds of Romanian territory was occupied by the Central Powers, and the Romanian army and government were forced to flee to Romanian Moldova. The government installed itself in Iași, together with a French military mission headed by General Berthelot. It was events in Russia, however, which eventually forced Romania out of the Entente camp and into that of the Central Powers. Following the bolshevik seizure

of power in November 1917, Lenin sued for peace with the Central Powers. Bereft now of Russian military support, Romania was forced to sign an armistice with the Central Powers at Focșani on 9 December, although she remained formally allied with the Entente.

Meanwhile, in Bessarabia, following the bolshevik revolution in November, officers and soldiers had convened an assembly in Chișinău, declared autonomy for Bessarabia and called for the creation of a national council, the so-called *Sfatul Țării*, which convened in Chișinău later in the month. On 2 December the *Sfatul Țării*, with Ion Inculeț as president, declared Bessarabia an autonomous republic within Russia. Later in December, however, the *Sfatul Țării*, now facing bolshevik incursions into Bessarabia, approached the French military mission which was still stationed in Iași. Representatives of the *Sfatul* requested that a French consulate be opened in Chișinău and for French instructors to be sent to help build up the security forces in Bessarabia. Three French foreign ministry officials were duly dispatched to Chișinău. A second delegation from the *Sfatul Țării* arrived soon after, however, headed by Ion Pelivan, who was now director of foreign affairs of the *Sfatul Țării*, who requested more help against the bolsheviks. Despite Pelivan's subsequent avowals of the thoroughly Romanian make-up of Bessarabia, he turned down the French offer of regular Romanian troops in favour of units of other national groups, or Transylvanian 'volunteers'. Pelivan was concerned about the anti-Romanian sentiment amongst Bessarabia's ethnic minorities and the Moldovan peasantry. The latter feared that if Romanian troops entered Bessarabia they would halt moves towards thorough-going land reform. The French foreign minister in Iași also agreed to Pelivan's request for 'an explicit, public French declaration affirming the autonomy of Bessarabia vis-à-vis Romania'.<sup>262</sup> The disorganization of the Transylvanian volunteers, however, meant that the French mission in Chișinău was forced to recommend the use of Romanian troops to guard railways and supply depots in Bessarabia from bolshevik attacks. Nevertheless, the possibility of Romanian troops entering Bessarabia caused considerable controversy in the *Sfatul Țării*. The president, Ion Inculeț, was forced to calm national-minority deputies by stating that 'here there is only a handful of men who turn their looks across the [River] Prut. The paths of Bessarabia merge into the paths of Russia, for Russia is a country much freer than Romania'.<sup>263</sup>

Indeed, Romanian political and military leaders were themselves reluctant to send Romanian troops into Bessarabia in late 1917 and early 1918, fearing that such an action could sour relations with Russia, and with the Entente, to whom they were still technically allied.<sup>264</sup> The Romanian



military and government thus found themselves precariously poised between the Entente and the Central Powers. Over the following year, however, Romania's deft handling of the diplomatic and military situation was to lead to the creation of a Greater Romania containing both Transylvania and Bessarabia, something which Romanian politicians had not envisaged in 1916 when entering the war on the side of the Entente.

Early in 1918, the Germans suggested that the Romanians should occupy Bessarabia. This was attractive to those prepared to collaborate with the Germans, led by Alexandru Marghiloman, who believed that the Central Powers were now bound to win the war, following Russia's withdrawal. By mid-January 1918, moreover, the Romanians were thoroughly alarmed by bolshevik activities in Bessarabia and the possibility that the violence would spread to Romania. On 17 January, the bolsheviks occupied Chişinău and dissolved the *Sfatul Țării*, while *Rumcerod* ('the central executive committee of the soviets of the Romanian front, Black Sea fleet and the Odessa region') spread its tentacles throughout Bessarabia.<sup>265</sup> Consequently on 19 January, the Romanian army, led by General Broşteanu, entered Bessarabia. Evidently neither Broşteanu nor his troops made themselves especially popular with the inhabitants of Bessarabia. They crushed all signs of hostility towards the Romanians which Broşteanu, not without justification under the circumstances, regarded as evidence of bolshevik sympathies.

The Romanian army, nevertheless, succeeded in driving the bolsheviks out of Bessarabia and restored the *Sfatul Țării* but meanwhile further complications had developed as a result of Ukraine's declaration of independence on 13 January 1918. This broke the direct geographic link between Bessarabia and Russia and brought with it the possibility of annexation by Ukraine which harboured claims on Bessarabia on account of its substantial Ukrainian population. In an attempt to outmanoeuvre Ukraine, the *Sfatul* declared the independence of Bessarabia as the 'Moldovan Democratic Republic' on 24 January and attempted, unsuccessfully, to gain official French recognition of Bessarabia's independence. The independent republic, however, was militarily and economically weak and was increasingly dependent upon the Romanian army to maintain order and to run utilities.<sup>266</sup> Furthermore, Ukraine continued to make territorial claims on the newly independent republic and this proved a crucial factor in the *Sfatul*'s declaration of conditional union with Romania on 27 March 1918.<sup>267</sup> Under the terms of the union, Bessarabia was to retain a number of privileges within Greater Romania, including an elected assembly, budgetary control, rights for national minorities and the completion of land redistribution.

Of paramount importance also in the *Sfatul*'s declaration of conditional union with Romania, was the fact that the Romanian government had signed a preliminary peace with the Central Powers at Buftea on 5 March 1918. Accordingly, Bessarabia had been offered to the Romanians as compensation for Romania's loss of the Dobrudja to Bulgaria. Austro-German troops had already occupied northern Bessarabia in February and were thus in a position to give the Romanians military support, if necessary, in their acquisition of Bessarabia. Moreover, under the conditions of the peace of Buftea, the French military mission was forced to leave Iași. Consequently, the *Sfatul Țării* was left with no basis of support against the bolsheviks other than Romania and her German ally.<sup>268</sup>

It seems, therefore, that the *Sfatul Țării* did not play the central role in the unification with Romania, as the traditional Romanian historiographical account suggests. Indeed, it was the Romanian government and the Central Powers which were the main actors in Bessarabia's union with Romania. Thereafter, conflict between the Romanian government and the *Sfatul Țării* was avoided due to the diplomatic intervention of Alexandru Marghiloman, who took over the Romanian government on 19 March, with the leaders of the various factions in the *Sfatul Țării*. Marghiloman was joined in his endeavours by Constantin Stere.<sup>269</sup>

The *Sfatul Țării*'s vote on the issue of union with Romania was held on 27 March 1918 and was won by 86 votes in favour, with only three votes against. 49 deputies, however, either abstained or were absent. As Charles King has written 'with Romanian troops already in Chișinău, Romanian planes circling above the meeting hall, and the Romanian prime minister waiting in the foyer, many minority deputies chose simply not to vote'.<sup>270</sup> On 3 April, Constantin Stere was voted president of the *Staful Țării*.<sup>271</sup>

During the course of 1918, however, Romania's foreign policy was to undergo a transformation leading to Bessarabia's integration into Greater Romania irrespective of the previously-agreed conditions. The failure of the German offensive on the Western Front in July 1918 and the subsequent collapse of the Habsburg monarchy in the autumn led to Romania's re-entry into the war on the side of the Western Allies just before the armistice in November 1918. The Romanians were thus able to argue that they were one of the victorious powers of the war and to lay claim to Habsburg territories.

By late November 1918, the Romanians of the Bukovina and Transylvania were preparing to declare their union with Romania. Under these circumstances, and encouraged by Pantelimon Halippa's 'Moldovan Bloc', the *Sfatul Țării* in Chișinău voted for union with Romania and



subsequently dissolved itself.<sup>272</sup> Deputies were encouraged to renounce the conditions attached to the 27 March vote on union with Romania by news of the Romanian government's decision to go ahead with large-scale land reform.<sup>273</sup> Fears that the Romanian government would not institute wide-ranging land redistribution had been a major factor in the peasantry's animosity towards the Romanians in 1917 and 1918. Nevertheless, there were already signs that relations between the Romanians living west of the River Prut and the inhabitants of Bessarabia would not be entirely cordial. On 20 November, only a week before the vote which accepted union with Romania, a group of *Sfatul Țării* deputies had submitted a memorandum, written in Russian, criticizing the behaviour of the Romanian administration in Bessarabia and demanding that the Romanians respect the privileges accorded to Bessarabia under the act of union of 27 March.<sup>274</sup>

At the Paris peace conference, Western approval of Romania's acquisition of Bessarabia came slowly and anti-Romanian elements within Bessarabia, such as the pro-Russian landowner Alexander Krupenski, whose family had remained staunchly pro-Russian since 1812, petitioned the peace conference against Romania. Krupenski denied that Romania had a historic right to Bessarabia since the Romanian state had not existed in 1812 when Bessarabia was separated from the principality of Moldova. He also denied the Romanian claim on national grounds, arguing that the Moldovans 'cannot possess any other than pro-Russian sentiments'. Although clearly an exaggeration, Krupenski was near the mark in stating that 'Romanian nationalism was born during the 30s of the last century, in Wallachia and Moldavia, and was progressively developed in Romania by the aid of schools and other institutions of the country. Bessarabia was always outside of this national movement ...'.<sup>275</sup> More significantly, perhaps, the US delegation were 'sceptical about the way Romania had acquired the territory ...' and this was reinforced by Ion Brătianu's refusal to hold a plebiscite in Bessarabia.<sup>276</sup> Although the Treaty of Trianon, which confirmed the new frontier between Romania and Hungary, was signed on 4 June 1920, the Council of Ambassadors at the peace conference did not present the Romanian delegation with a treaty of union between Bessarabia and Romania until the end of October. The treaty was suitably ambiguous regarding the province's status. Although Romanian sovereignty over the lands between the Prut and Dneestr rivers was confirmed, the treaty stipulated that 'Russia should adhere to the treaty when a government comes to power with which the Allies can do business'. Negotiations for a settlement, however, were to be in the hands of Romania and Russia, with arbitration over details in the purview

of the League of Nations.<sup>277</sup> The October treaty was thus hardly a ringing endorsement of Romania's claim to the province, and signatories to the treaty included neither the United States nor the Soviet Union. Ratification of the treaty by the other Great Powers was also slow, with Britain signing in May 1922, France in 1924 and Italy in 1927. Japan never ratified the treaty. Most importantly of all, even after Romania's diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union in 1934, the Soviets consistently refused to acknowledge Romanian sovereignty over Bessarabia. The issue was to remain a bone of contention between the two countries thereafter and was a major factor in Romania's gradual diplomatic shift towards the Axis in the late 1930s.

### *Interwar Bessarabia*

Meanwhile, the integration of Bessarabia into Greater Romania was not proving easy for the Romanian government. Bessarabia, in fact, reflected the national problems facing Romania as a whole.<sup>278</sup> From being an overwhelmingly homogeneous Romanian kingdom before 1914, some 30% of the population of interwar Romania consisted of national minorities. In Bessarabia, out of a total population of 2,864,402 people, only some 56.2% were Moldovans (that is to say, Romanian-speakers), with Russians making up 12.3%, Ukrainians 11%, Jews 7.2% and Bulgarians 5.7% of the population.<sup>279</sup>

Furthermore, while Romanian-speakers throughout Romania were predominantly rural peasants, the urban centres and their related economic and professional sectors were dominated by members of the minority groups: Hungarians, Germans and Jews in Transylvania, for instance, and Russians and Jews in Bessarabia. The Bessarabian provincial capital, Chişinău, was some 46% Jewish and 27% Russian, while some 37% of Bessarabia's total urban population were Jewish.<sup>280</sup> While the Romanian-speaking peasantry tended to distrust the 'alien' cities, the urbanized minorities tended to look down on the less educated and poorer Romanian rural population and looked upon Romanian culture in general as 'parvenu'. The interwar Romanian governments, politicians and intellectuals, for their part, aimed to elevate the status of the Romanian rural majority, who were regarded as having been 'disadvantaged' over the course of many centuries as a result of their political domination by other national groups. The purpose of the 'romanianization' policies undertaken by the Romanian governments during the 1920s and 1930s, therefore, was aimed at reversing this situation by promoting the Romanians in the



country's educational system, administration and economy and by adjusting the country's cultural life to make it reflect the demographic balance.

Bessarabia's minorities, and even many Moldovans, particularly those in the towns, were clearly ill-disposed towards the Romanian government from the outset and remained staunchly russophile despite the seizure of power in Russia by the bolsheviks. Worryingly for the Romanian authorities, in 1920 the French military attaché reported that even the minorities' middle classes would welcome the Russian army into Bessarabia to rid them of the Romanians.<sup>281</sup> A report by a member of the Romanian ministry of the interior the following year, pointed out that the various minority groups in Bessarabia each sought their own 'state within a state' which would include their own independent school system. That the urban population in particular was hostile to the new authorities were borne out by a French diplomat in 1922 who noted that the urban population of Bessarabia was 'purely Russian and Israelite and violently anti-Romanian'.<sup>282</sup>

Relations between the Romanians from west of the River Prut and the various peoples of Bessarabia were severely complicated by the continuation of numerous bolshevik incursions into Bessarabia, from 1917 onwards, which were frequently combined with anti-Romanian propaganda designed to stir up the population against the Romanian authorities. There were some 118 bolshevik incursions over the Dnestr between 1921 and 1925 and several thousand smaller incidents within the province ranging from spying and sabotage of trains to minor incidents of violence. Between 1919 and 1925, the Romanian authorities made 3,002 arrests in connection with bolshevik terrorist organizations in Bessarabia. 818 arrests alone were made in connection with the Tatarbunar rebellion in September 1924, to which we shall return.<sup>283</sup> Independent and, later, Russian and Soviet Ukraine had harboured irredentist ambitions over Bessarabia in 1917 and 1918, and did not fail to take advantage of Romania's worsening relations with her minorities to disseminate both bolshevik and anti-Romanian propaganda amongst the national minorities. In June 1918 Ukrainian agitators in Ismail informed local people that Bessarabia would soon be annexed to Ukraine and urged the people to flee the province and join the Russian army.<sup>284</sup> It will be remembered that, in any case, many of the inhabitants of Bessarabia had been much involved in the social questions surrounding the revolutionary period in 1917, and were thus open to such propaganda emanating from Russia or Ukraine. The Romanian government were thus forced to declare a state of emergency along all borders of the country in March 1921 and to censor all bolshevik and anti-Romanian propaganda material.

Bessarabia's desperate economic plight in the immediate post-war years and relations between the Romanian authorities and the Bessarabian population was severely aggravated by the large number of refugees fleeing from east of the River Dnestr into Bessarabia, many of whom were suspected by the authorities of being bolshevik infiltrators. Between January 1918 and April 1922, 168,000 refugees entered Bessarabia and in some towns in the province the 'floating population' could be as high as 60% of the overall population. Most of these refugees were of Russian, Ukrainian or Jewish origin.<sup>285</sup> In Chişinău alone, which had a permanent population of 133,000, there were some 66,500 additional people there in 1919.<sup>286</sup> This expansion of the population was clearly difficult for the authorities to cope with in view of Romania's acute post-war economic and social problems.

It was not only the national minorities which the Romanian authorities suspected of Russian and bolshevik sympathies. A further problem was posed by the fact that the majority population, in whose name the province had been acquired by Romania, had little sense of a 'Romanian' identity. Amongst the small Moldovan urban middle class and intelligentsia many were strongly russophile and regarded Romanian as a peasant language, and only Russian as the language of high culture. One of the results of the russification process in the nineteenth century had been the alienation of much of the Moldovan intelligentsia from the peasantry and from the Romanian language which they spoke. This was particularly problematic for the Romanian government in the sphere of education where many teachers of Moldovan origin, whom the government hoped to employ as teachers of Romanian, identified so heavily with Russian language that their knowledge of Romanian was often rudimentary. In part, this was due to the fact that the Romanians of the principalities had converted from the Old Church Slavonic to the Latin alphabet in 1862, while in Bessarabia, the Slavonic and Russian alphabets had been in use right up to 1918.

We should at this point make some brief comments about the Romanian language and its relationship to 'Moldovan'. Moldovans, such as Dimitrie Cantemir, for instance, usually referred to the language spoken in the Moldovan principality, and subsequently Bessarabia, as the 'Moldovan language'. According to one Western commentator, however, 'Moldovan' is, in fact, one of the six regional sub-dialects of 'Daco-Romanian' and, therefore, 'a recognized dialect of standard Romanian . . .'.<sup>287</sup> In the years following Bessarabia's incorporation into the Soviet Union during the Second World War, many words of Russian origin were incorporated into the language, either through a natural process of assimilation or by



'forced injection' by the Soviet authorities. Nevertheless, even in the interwar period there was clearly already a strong Slavonic influence on the language as a result of the Moldovans' long cultural and political relations, and indeed frequent inter-marriage, with the East Slavs, and in particular the Ruthenes and Poles. Dimitrie Cantemir, writing in the early eighteenth century, observed that the 'Moldovan language' spoken by the Moldovans who lived on the Dnestr river included many words of Polish origin.<sup>288</sup> The historians Alexandru Boldur and Gheorghe Brătianu likewise observed early in the twentieth century that the Ruthene connection had greatly influenced both the language and customs of the Moldovans over the course of many centuries, especially in the north of the Moldovan principality.<sup>289</sup> The Moldovans had long lived 'cheek by jowl' with the Ruthenes and this was reinforced in Bessarabia after 1812 by the number of settlers entering the province from Russian Ukraine. Commenting on the contemporary 'Moldovan' language, Donald Dyer states that 'Moldovan is a dialect of Romanian which is spoken in Moldova and which displays Romanian dialectical features peculiar to its geographic region. It also shows certain influences on its grammar from the grammars of Russian and the Ukrainian language with which it has been in contact for centuries'.<sup>290</sup>

West of the River Prut, however, the introduction of the Latin alphabet in the nineteenth century and the stress on the Romanians' links to the Latin nations of Western Europe, and especially France, led to the introduction of many words of French, Italian and Latin origin into the language during the nineteenth century. As a result, the language was 'much changed by terms and phrasing imported from Latinate Western Europe'.<sup>291</sup> The different cultural and political orbits of Bessarabia and of the Romanian lands west of the River Prut thus were themselves felt in language and, since language is the badge of nationality, in popular perceptions of identity.

The differences which had developed in the Romanian used on either side of the River Prut, together with the Russian-orientation of many of the Moldovan middle class, made the 'romanianization' of education in Bessarabia hard. As early as the summer of 1917 the Romanian government set up courses in the Romanian language for Moldovan teachers. The Latin alphabet was introduced and courses on the literature, history and geography of Romania were also delivered to potential teachers. Adult language courses were set up in rural areas, and Romanian books and maps distributed amongst the population. Romanian libraries were opened throughout Bessarabia and in 1917 the historians Ștefan Ciobanu and Ion Nistor lectured on Romanian culture and history.

Nevertheless, the lack of fully-trained Romanian teachers made it necessary to send teachers from elsewhere in Romania to Bessarabia. Language tests were also introduced to ascertain the proficiency of the local teachers. Neither measure was welcomed warmly in Bessarabia.

Specific measures were now taken to 'romanianize' the whole education system in Bessarabia. In 1922 the ministry of education in Bucharest banned the use of Russian as a means of communication in schools. Russian teachers were purged from the education system. By the late 1930s, there were no state-financed schools operating in either Russian or Ukrainian. Although minorities were allowed to set up their own privately funded schools, even these schools were forced to give instruction in Romanian. Yet despite the government's efforts at 'romanianizing' the province, the Bessarabian population retained an attachment to Russian culture. Many of the new teachers of Romanian continued to converse in Russian at home, and, to the disgust of Romanian officials, peasants were often found to have pictures of the former Russian imperial family still adorning their wall in the 1930s. Indeed, in the 1930s there were indications that the Russian language was re-emerging as the vehicle of instruction in many schools, despite the government's prohibition. Southern Bessarabia, with its large number of long-established minority groups, was particularly vulnerable. A school inspector reported in 1936 that 'the twenty years of Romanian rule and of nationalization of the minority villages through the schools in Cetatea Albă county have not born fruit'.<sup>292</sup>

A similar policy of 'romanianization' was conducted within the Bessarabian administrative system inherited from the tsarist period. Russian-speaking bureaucrats were gradually squeezed out of the administration, yet even some of the bureaucrats of Moldovan origin were frequently impervious to the admonitions of the Romanian authorities to use the Romanian language or to take an oath of loyalty to the Romanian king and state. As with the 'romanianization' of the education system, however, the lack of Romanian-speaking trained personnel proved a problem, and many administrators had to be sent from Bucharest. Indeed, for several years after the 1918 union russophile functionaries had to be utilized and until 1925 there was considerable administrative overlap between the new Romanian and the old Russian systems. It proved impossible, for example, to immediately dispense with the *zemstvo* system in Bessarabia owing to Russian opposition, despite the many examples of corruption and malpractice which emerged.<sup>293</sup> In October 1924, however, a Romanian language-test was introduced for administrators in Bessarabia and in June 1925 the Romanian administrative system was finally applied to Bessarabia.



Even attempts to 'romanianize' the Orthodox church in Bessarabia proved controversial.<sup>294</sup> In an ironic reversal of Archbishop Lebedev's russification policies of the previous century, Russian churches were either closed or forced to conduct their services in Romanian. This outraged Russian priests and their congregations and, early in 1918, the last Russian archbishop in Bessarabia, Anastasie, vainly attempted to create an autonomous Bessarabia church outside Romanian control. There was also opposition amongst the Orthodox faithful of all national groups to the conversion from the traditional Julian calendar to the Gregorian in use west of the Prut. It was recognized by many Romanians from west of the River Prut that religious life in Bessarabia had a markedly different quality to that in the rest of Romania, being suffused with Russian influences. The existence of the so-called 'Bessarabian Orthodoxy' often created tensions between the local population and Romanian officials as a result of the relative religious indifference often displayed by teachers, administrators and policemen 'imported' from elsewhere in Romania. In particular, the 'faithful' in Bessarabia resented the fact that many priests were detained by the civil authorities in the early years of the union on suspicion of being pro-Russian. The Romanian authorities feared that the Orthodox church in Bessarabia might become a 'stalking horse' for Soviet Russia. In 1930 a professor from Iași reported to the metropolitan of Moldova that the Russian elements within the Orthodox church in Bessarabia, including the continued use of Russian music, constituted 'a national peril'.

Bessarabia's interwar economic problems also made it difficult to reconcile the Bessarabian population to the Romanian central government, even though few of Bessarabia's problems can be ascribed directly to the machinations of Bucharest politicians.<sup>295</sup> The general economic problems affecting Romania as a whole during this period were, however, particularly acute in Bessarabia which had a greater proportion of rural peasants amongst its population than any other part of Greater Romania. Land reform failed to solve the problem of rural overpopulation. As the population grew, peasant holdings were further sub-divided and were soon unable to provide for the needs of the peasant households. There was already a rural crisis in Bessarabia in the early 1920s as a result of the loss of agricultural markets east of the Dnestr and the closure of the border with Russia. The fruit-growing villages on the Lower Dnestr were especially affected by this, and many plantations close to the border were simply neglected. To this we should add the problems created by the liquidation of the Russian banks in 1918 and the lack of cheap peasant credit. Some peasants were paying interest as high as 40% to their

creditors. As a result many were forced to sell their livestock to make money. Whereas the number of horses and livestock had stood at over four million animals in 1923, this had fallen to well under three million by 1929. Matters were made worse by the frequent droughts which afflicted southern Bessarabia and by the onset of the Great Depression after 1929 which depressed the price of grain in Bessarabia by 30 to 50%.<sup>296</sup>

Matters did improve in the agricultural sector in the later 1930s as a result of Romania's exploitation of new European markets, primarily in Germany, for the export of fruit. Fruit-growing on the Lower Dnestr revived and the area became one of Romania's most important economic regions. Its produce accounted for almost one-quarter of Romania's total exports and was dubbed the 'California of Romania'.<sup>297</sup>

The Romanian central government, however, made no attempt to expand Bessarabia's tiny industrial sector, envisaging that Bessarabia would remain an agricultural producer. Industrial levels in the 1930s were much the same as they had been in the late tsarist period, and were largely restricted to food-processing. This included flour milling and the production of vegetable oil, as well as basic consumables such as textiles and soap. Much of the food-processing industry, it should be noted, was barely industrialized. The Bessarabian milling industry, which was the best developed in the whole of Greater Romania, consisted of one thousand small peasant-owned mills.

There was certainly a feeling amongst many in Bessarabia that the central government was doing little to help Bessarabia's economic plight. The vegetable oil industry, for example, was damaged by competition from Bucharest factories which were able to undercut Bessarabian producers as a result of preferential rates of transport on the railways. Likewise, Bessarabia's small textile industry was now forced to acquire wool from Romanian middle-men instead of directly from abroad, forcing the closure of many factories. The establishment of a new transport infrastructure and of rail links to the rest of Romania did not relieve the overall condition of poverty and 'underdevelopment' in Bessarabia.

On the eve of the Second World War, Bessarabia was, of all the territories Romania had acquired after the First World War, still the least assimilated into the body of Greater Romania. It was by no means clear that the Romanian government had persuaded the Moldovans that they were indeed 'Romanians'. Many amongst the russophile Moldovan middle class remained largely unmoved by the attempts to persuade them of their affinities with the Romanians west of the Prut, while many of the 'pan-Romanianists', such as the politician Ion Pelivan, had long since left Bessarabia for other parts of Romania. Moreover, although literacy rates



had risen, the literate still only amounted to some 30% of the Bessarabian population, compared to some 60% of the population in Transylvania.<sup>298</sup> Continued confusion over the use of the Latin alphabet probably accounted for some of this, as well as traditionally low attendance at school. Almost 30% of children in Bessarabia were still not attending elementary education as late as 1939.<sup>299</sup> It seems unlikely, therefore, that the Romanian authorities had great success using the education structure to persuade the peasantry that they were, in fact, Romanians.

Moreover, Bessarabia's urban environment continued to be overwhelmingly dominated by Russians and Jews in the 1930s, despite the 'romanianization' policies. Even the daily press in Chişinău and other cities remained largely in their hands. The Jewish population of Bessarabia, in particular, remained a community apart from the Moldovan peasant majority. Of the 206,958 Jews in Bessarabia in 1930, some 201,278 declared Yiddish to be their native language, while their second language of operation was invariably Russian rather than Romanian.<sup>300</sup> Traditional anti-semitic feelings in the province and elsewhere in Romania, were exacerbated by the Romanian authorities' suspicions of the Jews as bolshevik agents, following the influx of Jewish refugees into Bessarabia in the wake of the Russian civil war.

The Moldovans' weak sense of kinship with the Romanians west of the Prut, and the province's other national divisions and social and economic problems, made Bessarabia, as we have seen, an easy target for infiltration by its powerful Soviet neighbour. As a contemporary observer noted, 'Bessarabia was honey-combed with revolutionary organizations, financed and directed from Soviet Russia. These exploited the post-war economic and political difficulties of the country, [and] the mistakes of the new regime . . .'.<sup>301</sup> Although this account doubtless exaggerates the extent of revolutionary activity, there can be no doubt that Bessarabia remained a target of Soviet ambition.

### *The Soviet Union and Bessarabia*

The most significant Soviet incursion into Bessarabian territory occurred on 14 September 1924, when the revolutionary agitator known as Nenin, (Andrei Culschnikoff), a former revolutionary commissar and head of the Odessa revolutionary committee, launched an occupation of the southern Bessarabian town of Tatarbunar, mainly inhabited by ethnic Bulgarians. Nenin, armed by the Russians, hoped to incite the local population into rebellion against the Romanians. Although the Romanian authorities

were able to curb the uprising, Nenin's frequent references to the imminent foundation of a 'soviet republic of Moldova' indicated that the Soviets were not about to end their pressure on Bessarabia. Only a few weeks later, in October 1924, the Soviet Union announced the creation of the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR), created out of Ukrainian lands on the left bank of the Dnestr, which the Romanians knew as 'Transnistria'. The purpose of the MASSR was to place pressure on the Romanian state regarding its sovereignty over Bessarabia and to stimulate revolution in Bessarabia against Romania. Consequently, the Soviets declared the whole of Romanian Bessarabia to be officially part of the new MASSR, with the official capital at Chişinău (in Romanian Bessarabia) but with a provisional capital first at Balta and later at Tiraspol, both on the left bank of the Dnestr.

Although the new republic was ostensibly 'Moldovan', almost 50% of its population were in fact Ukrainian, and there were also substantial Russian and Jewish minorities. Less than a third of the MASSR's population were Romanian-speaking. Furthermore, the territory of the new MASSR had never formerly been a part either of the historic principality of Moldova or the subsequent Romanian state. Nevertheless, the MASSR provided a territorial base from which the Soviets could continue their physical and propagandistic incursions into Romanian Bessarabia. Moreover, it was hoped that the Soviet republic would act as a magnet to the Moldovans of Bessarabia and thus help to undermine the unity of the Greater Romanian state.

To this end, the Soviet authorities within the MASSR began to claim that the Moldovans of Bessarabia and the MASSR were an ethnic group distinct from the Romanians, who spoke a separate and entirely independent language.<sup>302</sup> Soviet linguists set about to create a Moldovan language, based upon the language spoken by the Moldovan peasantry in Bessarabia and in Transnistria, where the peasants had been particularly influenced by the Ukrainian language. Out of this, they hoped to construct a standardized grammar and a literary Moldovan which would be quite distinct from the 'frenchified' Romanian employed west of the Prut. Thus, in 1929 a Moldovan grammar, in the Cyrillic script and based upon the language spoken by the peasantry of Bessarabia and Transnistria, was produced by the linguist Leonid Madan, who even went so far as to claim that there were racial differences between the Moldovans and the Romanians.

The Soviet authorities then began a campaign to impose this language on the Romanian-speaking population of the MASSR. They very quickly, however, ran into the problems that had faced the imperial 'russifiers' in the nineteenth century and the 'romanianizers' in interwar Bessarabia: a



lack of trained teachers and sufficient textbooks. In any case in 1932, the Soviet authorities did an about-turn in their 'moldovanization' campaign and drew a halt to the theory of a separate Moldovan identity. The Latin alphabet was introduced to the MASSR and linguists were now informed that the Moldovan language should be comprehensible throughout Romania. The Soviets now hoped that, through these policies, they could facilitate Soviet influence throughout Greater Romania and exploit the political tensions that had developed in Bucharest as a result of King Carol II's return to the throne in 1930. Madan's works, together with those of his colleagues who had advocated the existence of a separate Moldovan language and identity, were removed from all libraries. In 1938, however, the Latinization phase also came to an end, and the Cyrillic alphabet was re-introduced, as part of a Union-wide policy. Despite the change to the Cyrillic script, however, there was no reversion to Madan's construction, so that thereafter, the Moldovan written language 'represented little more than a Cyrillic version of literary Romanian'.<sup>303</sup>

By the mid-1930s there was some improvement in Soviet-Romanian relations and in 1934 Romania finally established full diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. The Soviets, however, still refused to acknowledge Romanian sovereignty over Bessarabia. This factor, together with the strong anti-bolshevik sentiments of King Carol II and the Romanian political establishment, as well as that of Romania's Polish ally, prevented the Romanian foreign minister, Nicolae Titulescu, from concluding a mutual assistance pact with the Soviet Union in 1936.<sup>304</sup> Indeed, from 1936 onwards, particularly following France's failure to respond to Hitler's remilitarization of the Rhineland in March 1936, a growing number of people in Romania began to see in Germany a potential counter-weight to the spread of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe and as a bulwark against Soviet ambitions regarding Bessarabia.

In 1937 incidents once again flared on the Soviet-Romanian frontier on the River Dnestr as Soviet-Romanian relations worsened. With the German-Soviet carve-up of Poland in September 1939, Romania lost her sole military ally against a potential Soviet attack. Moreover, with the Soviet Union's occupation of Polish territory which bordered on to Romania, the Soviets were now regarded as an immediate military threat to Romanian security. In late September 1939, when the French ambassador in Bucharest informed the Romanian foreign minister, Grigore Gafencu, that France's aim in the war was the complete defeat of Germany, Gafencu replied that this was contrary to Romanian interests, 'for if Germany is destroyed, bolshevism will come to Central Europe and Romania will be lost'.<sup>305</sup>

During the winter of 1939 and 1940, rumours began to circulate in Bucharest regarding the Soviet Union's 'interest' in Bessarabia, as agreed under the terms of the August 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact. Romanian diplomats attempted to convince German officials of their countries' common anti-bolshevism and need to contain Soviet expansion. Germany's need to retain Soviet goodwill throughout 1940, and the concentration of German forces in western and northern Europe meant, however, that Germany was in no position to support Romania against the Soviet claim to Bessarabia, which they had, in any case, already accepted in the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Taking advantage of Germany's concentration on events in western Europe in the summer of 1940, the Soviet's presented their ultimatum for the surrender of Bessarabia, together with northern Bukovina, which had not formed part of the Nazi-Soviet Pact and to which the Soviet Union had no historic claim. In addition, the Soviets demanded the town of Herța, which belonged to neither Bessarabia nor northern Bukovina, but was in fact part of Romanian Moldova. The Soviet annexation of Herța came about due to a conveniently thick pencil line drawn by Molotov, the Soviet commissar of foreign affairs, on a map of the area which he handed to the Romanians on 26 June. The line covered a seven-mile band of territory which the Soviets, needless to say, interpreted to their own advantage.

Although the Romanian government had at first been prepared to fight for Bessarabia, King Carol eventually accepted the ultimatum on 28 June 1940. He had been strongly advised to do so by German and Italian advisers, who feared that Romania was not militarily prepared for a conflict with the Soviet Union. As a result of the annexation, Romania lost 51,000 km<sup>2</sup> of territory and some 3.9 million people, of whom the largest national group were the Moldovans.

The loss of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, and the fear of further Soviet incursions into Romania, led directly to King Carol's rapprochement with Germany and requests for an alliance during the summer of 1940. Such a policy seemed justified in view of the fact that during July and August, the Soviets began to back Hungarian and Bulgarian revisionist claims on Romania openly. By late August, the Romanians were expecting an imminent invasion by the Soviets from newly-annexed northern Bukovina. Romanian rapprochement with Germany, however, did not prevent Romania's loss of northern Transylvania to Hungary under the Axis Vienna Award of 30 August 1940.

Nevertheless, during the course of events in the summer of 1940 which led to Romania's loss of northern Transylvania to Hungary, it was once again clear, as it had been during the First World War, that both the



Romanian government and public opinion regarded Transylvania as more integral to the Romanian state than Bessarabia, hard though the loss of this province was. On 27 August 1940, the Romanian minister president, Ion Gigurtu, sent a letter to German foreign minister Ribbentrop. Gigurtu stated that public opinion had accepted the need to cede Bessarabia to the Soviet Union in June 1940, on Axis advice, in order to avoid war with the Soviet Union. The question of ceding part of Transylvania to Hungary, however, was of a quite different order since, 'Transylvania', wrote Gigurtu, 'was always considered by us as a fortress of Romanianism, in which our nation . . . developed'. The Romanian people had accepted the necessity to cede Bessarabia, argued Gigurtu, precisely in order to be able to resist revisionist claims on Transylvania where the Romanians 'have lived for eighteen centuries'.<sup>306</sup>

Despite the great shock and anger resulting from the loss of northern Transylvania, it was clear to King Carol and the majority of Romanian politicians, that in view of the geographic distance which separated Romania from the West, protection from further attack by the Soviet Union, and indeed the possible disappearance of Romania from the map of Europe, could only be provided by Germany. Moreover, alliance with, and loyalty to, Germany in a war against the Soviet Union could bring with it the possibility of the return of both northern Transylvania and Bessarabia as part of a post-war peace settlement.

Ion Antonescu's signing of the Tripartite Pact on 23 November 1940 was thus the culmination of the policy of rapprochement with Germany begun by King Carol as a direct result of the Soviet annexation of Bessarabia in June 1940. One year later, on 22 June 1941, the Romanian army, commanded by Marshal Antonescu, crossed the River Prut into Soviet Bessarabia as Germany's ally in the invasion of the Soviet Union. By late July, the Romanian territories annexed by the Soviet Union had been re-conquered and on 3 September 1941 Bessarabia and northern Bukovina were officially reincorporated into Romania. Although Antonescu took the decision to continue the fight against the Soviet Union beyond the former Romanian-Soviet Dnestr frontier, Antonescu did not wish the Romania occupation of Transnistria to become permanent. He feared that in this event, the Germans would regard Romanian gains in the east against the Soviet Union as a sufficient compensation to the Romanians for their loss of northern Transylvania to Hungary. Antonescu's objective was the reconstruction of Romania in its pre-June 1940 borders and not an expansion of Romanian territory to the east.<sup>307</sup> It was, nevertheless, necessary for Antonescu to establish a Romanian-run administration, for the duration of the occupation, pending a post-war

settlement. As it turned out, the Romanian occupation only lasted until late in 1943 when the Romanians withdrew in the face of the Red Army's victorious advance through Ukraine. Short though it was, the period witnessed a savage Romanian policy towards the Jews of Transnistria itself and those deported from Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, whom many Romanians accused of assisting the Soviets in their annexation of these Romanian territories in June 1940. Dennis Deletant's contribution to this volume provides a vivid account of this dark period in Transnistrian, and Romanian, history.

Despite Antonescu's unwillingness to countenance a permanent occupation of Transnistria, a number of works were published during the Romanian occupation justifying a Romanian claim to the area on historic and national grounds. Indeed, such claims to Transnistria had been put forward shortly after the First World War. The industrious historians Nicolae Iorga and Ion Nistor had claimed that the Romanian population of the Transnistria area was some 400–500,000. This was clearly an exaggeration since, as Dennis Deletant points out in his article, in the 1920s the Romanian-speaking population was only some 10% of a total population of about two-and-a-half million. Iorga and Nistor further claimed that although the River Dnestr had been the eastern border of the medieval principality of Moldova, it was a political, rather than a national, border. As Iorga wrote, 'by 1400 the Dnestr was not only a Moldovan border, but a Romanian river'. In other words, the Dnestr river was populated on both banks by Romanian-speakers. Both historians stressed the importance of Moldovan landowners and traders throughout the centuries in Transnistria which, as we have discussed, was not without foundation, but denied any significant Slavonic presence or influence in the area before the eighteenth century (in the face of much evidence to the contrary).<sup>308</sup>

These themes were taken up again during the Romanian occupation of Transnistria in the Second World War. Thus, Emil Diaconescu claimed a continuous Romanian-speaking presence in the area from antiquity up until the contemporary occupation. Indeed, apparently the Dacian ruler Burebista's ancient kingdom stretched further east than the lands of twentieth-century Romania, even beyond the River Bug. Like Iorga before him, Diaconescu stressed a Romanian-speaking presence in, and administration over, the Transnistrian area right up until Catherine the Great's conquests of the lands in the late eighteenth century. Diaconescu claimed that before Catherine's reign, 'life in Moldova beyond the Dnestr did not differ from the rest of the Romanian lands'.<sup>309</sup> A more explicitly 'blood and soil' argument was put forward by Vasile Netea who stated in 1943 that, 'the Transnistrians are blood of our blood and their soul



part of the great soul of Romania', and failed to find any differences in life-style, culture or folklore between the 'Romanians' on either side of the Dnestr.<sup>310</sup> Without denying the presence and influence of Romanian-speakers beyond the Dnestr throughout the previous centuries, their true numbers in Romanian-occupied Transnistria in the early 1940s were hardly sufficient to justify long-term occupation.

The existence of the works cited, however, suggests that some Romanians believed the permanent annexation of Transnistria to Romania to be possible. The Romanian Orthodox Church was particularly active in war-time Transnistria and a number of writers stressed the links between the Orthodox churches in Moldova and Transnistria from the seventeenth century onwards. There is some truth in this in that ecclesiastical links on either side of the Dnestr were strong during the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, when Gavril Bănulescu-Bodoni was active in both the Russian church and the church in the principalities. In particular, the eparchy of Chişinău and Hotin created in 1813 and presided over by Bodoni and his successor Sulima had extended from the Prut to the Bug river until 1837, when a separate archbishopric of Odessa and Cherson was created.<sup>311</sup>

During August 1941, when the Romanian administration was being established in Transnistria, the organization *Misiunea Ortodoxe Română în Transnistria* was also set up, with the intention of 're-christianizing' the area and reorganizing the church. Some 250 'missionary' priests were sent to the area from Romania to work together with 219 local priests. By 1943 the mission had apparently rebuilt several hundred churches and chapels and re-established religious instruction in schools in Transnistria. Two seminaries had also been opened, as well as a theology department, in Odessa.<sup>312</sup>

Notwithstanding these successes in the revival of Christianity in Transnistria, it became clear to the Romanians following the Battle of Stalingrad in 1943 that the Soviet Union was capable of defeating Germany. The Romanians, therefore, opened negotiations with the Western Allies, and subsequently the Soviet Union as well, in order to bring Romania into the war on the Allied side, hoping thereby to restore Romania to her pre-1940 borders. By March 1944, however, the Red Army had reached the River Prut, and in April the Soviet government declared the Prut to be the frontier between Romania and the Soviet Union. This was confirmed in the armistice between Romania and the Soviet Union which was signed following the 'palace coup' of 23 August 1944 which led to Marshal Antonescu's fall from power and Romania's entry into the war on the Allied side. The Soviet Union's possession of

Bessarabia, northern Bukovina and Herța was subsequently confirmed by the Paris peace treaty of February 1947.

### *Soviet and Post-Soviet Moldova*

The boundaries of the post-war Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) were not, however, identical to those of Romanian interwar Bessarabia. Following the Soviet seizure of Romanian territories in June 1940, Stalin had incorporated northern Bukovina, together with the Herța region, the northern Bessarabian district of Hotin and the southern Bessarabian districts of Cetatea Albă and Ismail, which included the port of Chilia, into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. All these territories had substantial Ukrainian populations, and Chilia and Cetatea Albă were renamed Kiliya and Bilhorod Dnistrovsky respectively. In placing large areas of Bessarabian territory within the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Stalin ensured that the strategically important Danube mouth and a large area of the Black Sea coast was in the more loyal hands of the Ukrainians, although thereby Ukraine also gained some 337,000 Moldovans.<sup>313</sup>

On 2 August 1940 the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) had been created from the union of the remainder of Bessarabia with the western part of the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR), which the Soviets had created on the left bank of the River Dnestr in 1924. The area which formed part of the new MSSR thus included left-bank towns such as Tiraspol and Dubăsari which had never belonged to the principality of Moldova or to Bessarabia.<sup>314</sup> The larger eastern area of the former MASSR was returned to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, from which the lands making up the MASSR had been taken in 1924. The MSSR was reconstituted in the above form following the withdrawal of the Romanian army early in 1944. The population of the new MSSR was some 2.4 million of which Moldovans made up some 68.8% of the population in 1941, with 11.1% Ukrainians and 6.7% Russians.<sup>315</sup> Ironically, the one ‘benefit’ of Bessarabia’s annexation by the Soviet Union was thus to increase the proportion of Moldovans in the population through the award of the areas with high Ukrainian populations to Ukraine.

The population of the MSSR had already suffered greatly as a result of the executions and deportations which were the inevitable result of the Soviet annexation of the province in June 1940. Between 1940 and the Romanian re-annexation in 1941, some 25,000 Moldovans were



deported.<sup>316</sup> Economically primitive at the best of times, Moldova was devastated by the war, with massive loss of livestock and agricultural equipment. With the onset of Soviet agricultural collectivization, came the attendant evils of grain requisitioning and 'de-kulakization', which was especially aimed at the Moldovan peasantry. These factors, together with a drought in 1946, led to a famine in which at least 115, 000 peasants died.<sup>317</sup> Waves of deportation to Central Asia and Siberia, again primarily aimed at the Moldovans, took place following Moldova's incorporation into the Soviet Union, with the intelligentsia, landowners and 'kulaks' specifically targeted. In the 1950s a policy of 'voluntary migration' to collective farms in the Soviet east also began. An accurate number of the persons deported is difficult to assess, but may have up to half-a-million people between 1944 and the 1960s.<sup>318</sup> The levels of deportation were sufficiently high such that by the 1950s there were villages made up solely of Romanian-speakers in the area between the Urals and Altai mountains in the Soviet Union.<sup>319</sup>

The purpose of the Soviet deportations was clearly aimed to ensure economic and ideological conformity. Furthermore, Stalin was well-known for his persecution of peoples who had been exposed to non-communist systems. Thus, the Soviets clearly regarded the Moldovans, who had belonged to 'bourgeois' and 'capitalist' Romania during the inter-war period, as less trustworthy than the Slavs. Similarly, in the decades after 1945, Soviet leaders sought to 'dilute' the potentially disloyal indigenous Moldovan population by encouraging immigration by Russians and Ukrainians into the MSSR. Between 1944 and 1979 more than half-a-million Slavs migrated into the republic, which had the effect of neutralizing the Moldovans' higher birth rate. Nevertheless, by 1989 the Moldovan population, which had stood at 68.8% of the total population in 1941, was still relatively 'healthy' at 64.5% of the total population, with a Ukrainian population of 13.8% (11.1% in 1941) and an increased Russian population of 13% in 1989, compared with 6.7% in 1941.<sup>320</sup>

Significantly, however, it was primarily the Russians and Ukrainians who dominated the communist party in Moldova, together with its organs of coercion, and the state-run economic sector. Moldovans who did rise to importance, such as Semion Grossu, first secretary from 1980 to 1989, tended to come from the left bank, or 'Transnistrian' side, of the Dnestr, and were completely loyal to the Soviet Union and integrated into Russian culture, much like the russophile Moldovan nobility in imperial Bessarabia. As we have already noted above, the left bank of the Dnestr had never formed part of the Romanian state as such, apart from the brief period of occupation during the Second World War, nor officially to the

medieval principality of Moldova, or to Russian Bessarabia. Despite the contacts between right and left bank Moldovans, the Moldovan population on the left bank of the Dnestr had been more heavily influenced by the numerically predominant Slavonic population for centuries, which had also left its imprint on the Moldovan spoken on the left bank of the river.<sup>321</sup>

The Cyrillic alphabet had been introduced into the MSSR in May 1941 and during the 1940s 'Moldovan' was once again regarded as a separate language to Romanian and the Slavonic elements to Moldovan history and culture were stressed. There was a general agreement on this among Soviet linguists until the 1970s.<sup>322</sup> The stress on the use of the Russian language of the 'Soviet people' from the early 1960s onwards, however, and the consequent 'russification' of the Soviet Union's languages, had a marked effect on the Moldovan spoken in the MSSR.<sup>323</sup> The increasing Russian influence on spoken Moldovan was thus a result of the spread of bilingualism amongst the Moldovans. As Dennis Deletant wrote in 1991, as a result of this, 'colloquial Moldavian shows significant Russian lexical influence . . . [but] the language of Soviet Moldavian writers is that of their Romanian counterparts west of the River Prut . . .'.<sup>324</sup>

Charles King has described the Soviet years in Moldova as being marked by 'the quiet acceptance of standard literary Romanian (albeit in the Cyrillic alphabet) as the linguistic norm for the MSSR . . .'.<sup>325</sup> Following the Soviet abandonment of attempts to create a Moldovan literary language in the MASSR in the 1930s from the language spoken by the peasantry, linguists in Moldova were forced to turn to the literary Romanian used west of the River Prut. As a result, according to King, '... Moldovan in its standard form was more Romanian by the 1980s than at any point in its history'.<sup>326</sup>

Meanwhile, in post-war communist Romania, all references to Bessarabia in history books were quietly dropped and Romanian historiography began to tow a slavish pro-Russian line in which the historic links between the Romanians and Slavs, and especially the Russians, were stressed to an absurd degree. As Wim van Meurs has written, 'the Russian state and people were consistently portrayed as altruistically aiding the Romanian people in its struggle against foreign imperialists and oppressors'.<sup>327</sup> Typical of the genre is an article written by Victor Chereșteșiu in 1953 in which he traces the history of the close bonds between the Russian and Romanian peoples from the reign of Stephen the Great, through that of Michael the Brave and Dimitrie Cantemir, whose genuine links with Russia are much dwelt upon. From there we eventually arrive at the Second World War when the Romanian workers and peas-



ants threw down their tools in a frenzied rush to join the army to fight with their Soviet comrades. In this interpretation of events, Romania's previous engagement on the German side is conveniently forgotten.<sup>328</sup> The deterioration of Russo-Romanian relations from the early 1960s, however, saw a reduction in such historiographical excesses and with the closure of various Russian cultural institutions in Romania, such as the *Institutul romîno-sovietic* in 1963, the brief russophile tendency in Romanian historiography can be said to have come to an end. The institution of the Ceauşescu regime and the policy of 'independence' from Moscow saw a return to the theory of the Latin origins of the Romanians, which was eventually to prove as exaggerated as the claims of the russophiles, and a consequent diminution of the Romanians' historic links with the Slavs.<sup>329</sup>

The Bessarabian 'question' re-emerged in public debate in 1964. In particular, the Romanians published works by Marx and Engels in which the founding fathers of socialism themselves condemned the Russian seizure of Bessarabia in 1812. As Adrian Pop has written elsewhere, '... Romanian historiography was one of the main channels through which many of the signs of insubordination towards the Kremlin were diffused'. By the 1970s Romanian historians were arguing the case for the Romanian nature of the lands between the Rivers Prut and Dnestr so vehemently that there were rumours in 1976 of a Soviet intervention on the Prut.<sup>330</sup> None of this was lost on the Moldovans, many of whom by the late 1960s were demanding the official recognition of Moldovan and Romanian as the same language and the use of the Latin alphabet. As a result, the Soviet authorities renewed their stress on the supposed 'independence' of Moldovan from the Romanian language during the 1970s.

Indeed, the MSSR remained a relatively 'conservative' backwater of the USSR right through into the 1980s. There had been little attempt in the post-war years to fully industrialize the republic, and what little was developed was located on the eastern side of the Dnestr. During the 1980s *glasnost* era of Soviet politics, the leadership in Chişinău, much like Ceauşescu in Bucharest, refused to 'liberalize'. Nevertheless, the decade witnessed a growing 'pan-Romanian' intellectual movement, the adherents of which argued that the Moldovans were a part of the Romanian nation and demanded a greater use of the Moldovan language within the republic.<sup>331</sup> The 'Popular Front of Moldova' (PFM) was established in May 1989, and its members looked forward to Moldova's ultimate political union with Romania. On 31 August 1989 the Moldovan Supreme Soviet officially declared 'Moldovan', in the Latin script, to be the state language, and recognized its unity with the Romanian language.

Both Russian and Moldovan, however, were to be the languages of inter-ethnic communication. As Michael Kirkwood correctly predicted shortly after the introduction of these laws, however, the introduction of the Latin script, with which many Moldovans, as well as the republic's numerous national groups, were unfamiliar, as well as the reinforcement of Russian as a language of communication, made it highly likely that 'the new law will continue to act as a focus for inter-ethnic strife rather than as a blueprint for ethnic harmony'.<sup>332</sup>

In elections early the following year, the PFM won the largest number of seats to the Moldovan Supreme Soviet and the Soviet subsequently adopted a modified version of the Romanian flag as the Moldovan national flag. On 23 June 1990, the Moldovan Soviet issued a declaration of sovereignty which specified the supremacy of the Moldovan constitution and laws throughout the republic. The Supreme Soviet, furthermore, declared that the name of the republic was the Romanian 'Moldova', rather than 'Moldavia' as used during the previous Soviet era, an apparent victory for the pan-Romanianist view of Moldova as an integral part of Romania. On the following day, in commemoration of the Soviet Union's annexation of Bessarabia fifty years previously, thousands of citizens of Romania and Moldova formed a 'human chain' across the River Prut as an act of national solidarity.

The backlash by other national groups, predicted by Kirkwood, was not long in coming. Fearing that they would be 'romanianized', in August 1990 five counties in southern Moldova declared independence as the 'Gagauz Soviet Socialist Republic'. In September an autonomous Transnistrian Soviet Socialist Republic was also declared. Following the Republic of Moldova's declaration of independence on 27 August 1991, civil war broke out late in 1991 in Transnistria between the 'Dnestr guard' and Moldovan government troops. A number of articles in this volume are concerned with this dispute. In 1995 Transnistria declared its independence.

Meanwhile, in Moldova itself the 'pan-Romanianists' were beginning to lose public support. In the country's first multi-party elections in February 1994, the Agrarian Democratic Party emerged as the largest party, and the Christian Democratic Popular Front (the former PFM) had a weak showing. The following month, an opinion poll showed that only some 5% of the Moldovan population favoured union with Romania. The fall in popularity for union with Romania may have been caused by the slow pace of political and economic reforms within Romania itself in the early 1990s, together with a perception that Romania was pressurizing the republic into union, which revived 'collective memories' of



Bessarabia's often harsh treatment within interwar Greater Romania. Within the Romanian nationalist-right in the early 1990s, there was certainly a strong 'annexationist' contingent.<sup>333</sup>

The ruling Agrarian Democrats and their 'Moldovanist' supporters were, therefore, able to revive, in a modified form, the former Soviet arguments regarding the distinctiveness of the Moldovans in relation to the Romanians, and thereby to argue that Moldova should remain independent. The 'Moldovanists' argued that although the Moldovans and Romanians share 'common origins in Trajan's Dacia . . . the annexation of Bessarabia by the Russian empire in 1812 . . . the proclamation of an independent [Moldovan] republic in 1918, the oppressive nature of Romanian rule between the wars, and the construction of a modern Moldovan state in the Soviet period have all contributed to the growth of a unique Moldovan nation'.<sup>334</sup> Significantly, the government confirmed Moldova's membership of the CIS in April 1994, a move which gave a clear indication that the government was not considering union with Romania. In July 1994 the government declared Moldova to be a sovereign and independent state with 'Moldovan', written in the Latin script, as its official language. The parliament consistently refused the demands made by the 'pan-Romanian' nationalists that the language should be officially renamed as 'Romanian'. Moreover, in Romania itself by the mid-1990s there was a growing feeling that union with their economically troubled Moldovan neighbour would place an unbearable strain upon the faltering Romanian economy. The Romanian elections of 1996 brought the 'pro-Western' Democratic Convention to power and reflected the fact that for most Romanians attempts to join Western institutions such as the EU and NATO were more important than union with Moldova.

The worsening economic climate in Moldova and the unresolved tensions between the Moldovans and the national minorities brought the Communist Party of Moldova back to power in the 1998 elections and again in 2001. In April 2001 President Voronin pledged to strengthen the country's political and economic ties with Russia and to boost the status of the Russian language within the republic. Policies to increase the status of Russian and to de-emphasize the historic links between Moldova and Romania, however, met with stiff opposition and the re-emergence of the 'pan-Romanianist' right-wing. Public demonstrations early in 2002 over the language issue, and the intervention of the Parliamentary Association of the Council of Europe, forced the government to withdraw proposals to introduce compulsory Russian-language classes. Further evidence that the 'pan-Romanianist' position is far from dead, is reflected in the attempt by some Orthodox priests to found a 'Bessarabian metro-

politan' which would be subordinated not to the Russian patriarchate, as is the case with the metropolitan church of Moldova, but to the Romanian patriarchate in Bucharest. The Moldovan government has refused to register the church, but has now been set a deadline for so doing by the Council of Europe.

Neither has the government been successful in resolving the Transnistrian dispute, despite its 'slavophile' credentials. On his installment in early 2001, President Voronin offered Transnistria a large measure of autonomy. Pro-Russian separatists replied to this by demanding a loose confederation of two sovereign and independent states. At the time of writing, the relationship between the Moldovan government and the Transnistrian break-away government remains unresolved and Transnistria continues to run its own affairs.

The status of the Russian army in Transnistria likewise remains unresolved. The agreement for withdrawal of Russian troops signed by Moldova and Russia in 1994 has still not been ratified by the Russian parliament. Despite the 1999 OSCE agreement under which Russia pledged to withdraw all its troops and weapons from Transnistria by the end of 2002, so far Russia has made progress only on the removal of weapons. In November 2001, Moldova and Russia signed a basic treaty on friendship and cooperation which gave Russia various roles within Moldovan affairs, such as that of a peace guarantor in Transnistria. A plan drawn up by President Putin's government, which would give Transnistria considerable autonomy and influence within the Moldovan legislature, proved, however, to be unacceptable even to President Voronin, let alone the nationalist right-wing in Moldova.

Relations between the Moldovan government and the Gagauz Yeri autonomous area were also in decline in 2002 following Gagauz demands for an autonomous 'republic' with its own budget, as well as greater representation within the central parliament. At the same time, Moldova's official relations with Romania also appear to be deteriorating. In late 2001 the Moldovan justice minister accused the Romanian government of 'expansionism' and in 2002 President Voronin accused the Romanians of sponsoring the nationalist opposition, who were at the time demonstrating against his pro-Russian language policies, with the aim of reincorporating 'Bessarabia' into Romania. Nevertheless, Moldova's incorporation into various international organizations continues. In June 2001 the republic entered the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe and in July 2001 entered the World Trade Organization.

As yet, however, there is no end in sight to the bleak economic conditions which prevailed during the late 1990s, as described by Ronald Hill in



this volume. On 9 July 2001, BBC 2's *Newsnight* programme, reported on a growing number of young men in Moldova who are prepared to sell their kidneys for money. These young men are transported to Turkey, many of them in the belief that they are simply giving blood, where the operation is carried out, and are paid the sum of \$2000. The organs are then sold on to Israel which has a serious problem with kidney donorship. In one village in Moldova as many as fourteen young men had sold their kidneys, with inevitable consequences for their health. Moreover, *The Economist* on 15 July 2002 confirmed that Moldova was the poorest country in Europe, even as it had been in 1999, beating Albania to reach this unenviable position. The average wage in 2002 was only \$3 per day and some staggering 600,000 people have left the country over the past few years.

In the midst of this economic crisis, the Moldovan 'conundrum' regarding the national identity of the Moldovans, their relationship to the Romanians across the River Prut, and their political orientation within the wider European context persists. Although President Voronin maintains aspirations to eventually join the EU, his government's relations with Russia are currently far warmer than his relations with his western neighbours. The last few years have seen the emergence of two other alternative identities and political orientations to those put forward by the 'Moldovanists' and the 'pan-Romanianists'. One can be described as the 'European' orientation, the adherents of which regard the Romanians and Moldovans as related but different. Thus, the 'Europeanists' regard use of the Romanian language by the Moldovans as a 'given' but acknowledge that differences have developed between the Romanians and Moldovans as a result of diverging historical paths in the nineteenth century. Their vision for Moldova's future development rests upon the strengthening of democracy and civil society and of cultural rights for ethnic minorities within a European framework. They are prepared to accept partnership with Russia only if that country is oriented towards the West. The 'neo-Soviets', on the other hand, are openly pro-Russian. They place no importance on the use of the Romanian language and regard the russification process which took place in the twentieth century as a positive process of 'modernization'. They regard the independence of the Republic of Moldova as a historical 'accident' and seek union for Moldova with Russia and Belarus. Thus, the neo-Soviets have no interest in orientation towards Western Europe. At the time of writing, the neo-Soviet vision of Moldova's future appears to be dominant.<sup>335</sup>

Throughout its history, Moldova has stood at the edge of empire — of the Roman and Byzantine empires, of the empires of the nomads, of the expanding Hungarian kingdom and of the Ottoman, Habsburg and

Russian empires. Moldova's people have on occasions been able to utilize this circumstance, balancing one neighbour against the other in order to preserve a fragile independence. On other occasions, however, the contest for its space has led to Moldova's dismemberment and partition. The age of empires has given way to the age of nations, and with this the nature of the contest for Moldova has been rewritten in terms of linguistic affiliation and cultural orientation. Moldovan identity rests, however, on foundations as fluid as its territory. It is for this reason likely to remain for the foreseeable future as contested a space as it has always been.

## Notes

- 1 For a discussion of the intricacies of the Ukrainian nationality question, see Andrew Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation*, New Haven and London, 2000, esp. pp. 1–20. For our purposes in the following introduction, the term 'Ruthene' will be used to describe the Orthodox East Slavs living in the historic lands of Poland-Lithuania and in the principality of Moldova, and 'Ukrainian' to describe the colonists from Russian Ukraine who settled in Russian-ruled Bessarabia during the nineteenth century, and in Soviet Moldova in the twentieth century.
- 2 Nicolae Iorga, *A History of Roumania: Land, People, Civilisation*, London, 1925, p. 35. Iorga's more scholarly works, however, contradict this assertion.
- 3 For a discussion of the 'Daco-Roman continuity theory' in the Ceaușescu era, see Dennis Deletant, 'The Past in Contemporary Romania: Some Reflections on Recent Romanian Historiography', in László Péter (ed.), *Historians and the History of Transylvania*, Boulder, CO, 1992, pp. 133–58.
- 4 For a discussion of this, see Frederick Kellogg, *A History of Romanian Historical Writing*, Bakersfield, CA, 1990, pp. 31–41. Gheorghe Brătianu's classic account has been translated into English as *An Enigma and Miracle of History: The Romanian People*, Bucharest, 1996.
- 5 Alexandru Boldur, *Istoria Basarabiei*, Bucharest, 1992, (hereafter, Boldur), pp. 81–6, 100. This is a reprint of three volumes originally published as *Istoria Basarabiei. Contribuții la studiul istoriei românilor*, 2 vols, Chișinău, 1937 and 1940 and *Basarabia românească*, Iași, no date of publication. On the Cuman origin of Moldovan placenames, see also, Gábor Lükő, 'Havaselve és Moldva népei a X-XII. században', *Ethnographia — Népelet*, 46, 1935, pp. 90–105.
- 6 For this, and much of what follows, see Dennis Deletant, 'Some Considerations on the Emergence of the Principality of Moldavia in the Middle of the Fourteenth Century', in Dennis Deletant, *Studies in Romanian History*, Bucharest, 1991, pp. 47–65. See also, Victor Spinei, *Moldavia in the 11<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Bucharest, 1986, (hereafter, Spinei), pp. 49–52 and László Makkai, *A milkói (kún) püspökség és népei*, Debrecen, 1936.
- 7 Dimitrie Cantemir, *Descriptio Moldaviae*, translated by Gh. Guțu, Bucharest, 1973, pp. 51–2 (hereafter, Cantemir).



- 8 Boldur, p. 136.
- 9 Dennis Deletant, 'Some Considerations on the Emergence of the Principality of Moldavia in the Middle of the Fourteenth Century', in Dennis Deletant, *Studies in Romanian History*, pp. 47–65 (59–60).
- 10 Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki (ed.), *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor*, Bucharest, 19 vols, 1887–1938, Vol. 1, Part 2, pp. 61–2. Vlach is the usual term given in Latin and other sources to designate Romanian-speakers. It survives in the modern 'Wallachian'.
- 11 Ibid., p. 94.
- 12 Ion Nistor, *Istoria Basarabiei*, Bucharest, 1991, (hereafter, Nistor), pp. 25–6. This work was originally published in Cernăuți in 1924.
- 13 Constantin C. Giurescu, *Transilvania în istoria poporului român*, Bucharest, 1967, pp. 51–2.
- 14 Ibid., p. 50.
- 15 Spinei, pp. 134–9.
- 16 Liviu Onu (ed.), *Grigore Ureche. Letopiseșul Țării Moldovei*, Bucharest, 1967, pp. 75–6.
- 17 Nistor, p. 25.
- 18 Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Die Moldau und ihre historischen Grenzen*, Bucharest, 1941, p. 19.
- 19 Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Tradiția istorică despre întemeierea statelor românești*, Bucharest, 1980, p. 142. This work was originally published in 1945.
- 20 Franz Adolf Wickenhauser, *Die deutschen Siedlungen in der Bukowina*, Czernowitz, 2 vols, 1885 and 1887, Vol. 1, 1885, p. 9.
- 21 Adam Neale, *Travels Through Some Parts of Germany, Poland, Moldavia and Turkey*, London, 1818, p. 165.
- 22 Constantin C. Giurescu and Dinu C. Giurescu, *Istoria românilor până astăzi*, Bucharest, 1975, p. 210.
- 23 Boldur, p. 63.
- 24 For much of what follows, see Gheorghe Brătianu, *Tradiția istorică despre întemeierea statelor românești*, pp. 148–52; Dennis Deletant, 'Genoese, Tatars and Romanians at the Mouth of the Danube in the Fourteenth Century', in *Studies in Romanian History*, pp. 25–46.
- 25 Șerban Papacostea, 'Desăvârșirea emancipării politice a Țării Românești și a Moldovei (1330–1392)', *Revista istorică*, Vol. 2, no. 9–10, 1991, pp. 471–94; Dennis Deletant, 'Moldavia between Hungary and Poland, 1347–1412', in *Studies in Romanian History*, pp. 66–91.
- 26 Nistor, pp. 29–30.
- 27 Alexandru I. Gonța, 'Mitropolia și episcopiile ortodoxe moldovenești în sec. XV', in *Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei. Revista oficială a Arhiepiscopiei Iașilor și a Episcopiei Romanul și Hușilor*, Vol. 34, no. 1–2, January–February 1958, pp. 21–36; M. Heppell, *The Ecclesiastical Career of Gregory Camblak*, London, 1979, pp. 18–23.
- 28 Although some Romanian scholars, in accordance with the 'Daco-Roman continuity theory', have attempted to prove the economic, cultural and spiritual continuity of the Romanian areas of Byzantium and hence with ancient Rome. See, for example Dan Gh. Teodor, *Romanitate Carpato-Dunăreană și Bizanțul în veacurile V–XI E.N.*, Iași, 1981.

- 29 For example, in the tenth century the Byzantines had diplomatic links with the pagan Pechenegs, established to the north of the Black Sea, in an area between the Dnieper and Danube rivers. The Byzantines also traded with these nomadic pastoralists, who drove their herds into the mountains of 'north Moldova' in the summer. The Pechenegs apparently had a considerable appetite for Byzantine luxury articles, such as purple cloth, gold brocade and 'purple-dyed leopard skins': C. A. Macartney, 'The Petchenegs', in Lóránt Czigány and László Péter (eds), *C. A. Macartney: Studies on Early Hungarian and Pontic History*, Aldershot, 1999, pp. 41–54 (42).
- 30 Boldur, pp. 128–30; Spinei, pp. 75–85, 167–8.
- 31 Ioan-Aurel Pop, 'The Religious Situation of the Hungarian Kingdom in the 13th and 14th Centuries', in C. Hawkesworth, M. Heppell, H. Norris (eds), *Religious Quest and National Identity in the Balkans*, Basingstoke and New York, 2001, pp. 78–90.
- 32 For this and much of what follows, see Dennis Deletant, 'Slavonic Letters in Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania from the Tenth to the Seventeenth Centuries', in *Studies in Romanian History*, pp. 92–115; P. P. Panaitescu, *Alexandru cel Bun. La cinci sute de ani dela moartea lui*, Bucharest, 1932, pp. 10–30.
- 33 Mircea Păcurariu, *Geschichte der rumänischen orthodoxen Kirche*, Erlangen, 1994, (hereafter, Păcurariu), pp. 86–7.
- 34 Grigore Nandriș (ed.), *Documente slavo-române din mănăstirile Muntelui Athos*, Bucharest, 1937, pp. 7–15.
- 35 Dennis Deletant, 'Some Aspects of the Byzantine Tradition in the Romanian Principalities', in *Studies in Romanian History*, pp. 186–200 (189).
- 36 M. Heppell, *The Ecclesiastical Career of Gregory Camblak*, London, 1979, pp. 19–23.
- 37 For this and much of what follows, see C. Cihodaru, *Alexandru cel Bun*, Iași, 1984, pp. 150–70.
- 38 Ibid., p. 153.
- 39 Boldur, p. 162.
- 40 Dennis Deletant, 'Moldavia between Hungary and Poland, 1347–1412', in *Studies in Romanian History*, pp. 66–91.
- 41 For what follows, see Nistor, pp. 30–36; Cihodaru, *Alexandru cel Bun*, pp. 120–49, 170–97.
- 42 M. Șesan, 'Husiții și Ortodoxia', in *Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei. Revista oficială a Arhiepiscopiei Iași și a Episcopiei Romanul și Hușilor*, Vol. 34, no. 3–4, March–April 1958, pp. 218–27. For Peter Payne, see 'Peter Payne in England', in R. R. Betts, *Essays in Czech History*, London, 1969, pp. 236–46.
- 43 Cihodaru, *Alexandru cel Bun*, p. 197.
- 44 Cantemir, pp. 135–6.
- 45 For what follows on the political and military events of Stephen's reign, see Nistor, pp. 48–70; Șerban Papacostea, *Ștefan cel Mare domn al Moldovei (1457–1504)*, Bucharest, 1990, esp. pp. 11–66; Mustafa Mehmet, 'Din raporturile Moldovei cu Imperial Otoman în a doua jumătate a veacului al XV-lea', *Studii revistă de istorie*, Vol. 13, no. 5, 1960, pp. 165–78.
- 46 Papacostea, *Ștefan cel Mare*, p. 42.



- 47 Quoted in N. Iorga, *Histoire des roumains et de romanité orientale*, 9 vols, Bucharest, 1937–1944, Vol. 4, *Les Chevaliers*, Bucharest, 1937, pp. 252–3.
- 48 For what follows subsequently regarding Stephen's relations with Ivan III, and the political importance of the prince's three marriages, see Gheorghe Gonța, 'Unele considerații privind evoluția raporturilor internaționale ale Moldovei și mentalității politice în timpul domniei lui Ștefan cel Mare', *Revistă de istorie a Moldovei*, Vol. 7, no. 3, 1996, pp. 40–54.
- 49 At this point, Kiev was an appanage principality within Lithuania.
- 50 Nevertheless, Pocuția remained a bone of contention between Moldova and Poland-Lithuania for several generations. John the Terrible was the last prince to attempt to incorporate the area into Moldova in 1572. For a full account, see Johann Nistor, 'Die Moldausichen Ansprüche auf Pokutien', in Historischen Kommission der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna, (ed.), *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte*, Vol. 100, 1911, pp. 1–182.
- 51 Andrei Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină în țările române în secolele XVI–XVIII*, Bucharest, 1983, p. 35.
- 52 For what follows on religion and culture under Stephen the Great, see Alexandru Elian, 'Moldova și Bizanțul în secolul al XV-lea', in M. Berza (ed.), *Cultura moldovenească în timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare*, Bucharest, 1964, pp. 97–179; Păcurariu, pp. 158–80; N. Iorga, *Istoria bisericii românești*, 2 vols, Bucharest, 1995, (originally published in Bucharest in 1928 and 1930), Vol. 1, pp. 98–104.
- 53 For the gifts of the Moldovan and Wallachian princes to Mount Athos, see Marcu Beza, *Urme românești în răsăritul ortodox*, Bucharest, 1937, pp. 35–59.
- 54 Papacostea, *Ștefan cel Mare*, p. 22–9.
- 55 Eugen Stănescu, 'Cultura scrisă moldovenească în vremea lui Ștefan cel Mare', in M. Berza (ed.), *Cultura moldovenească în timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare*, Bucharest, 1964, pp. 9–45.
- 56 A 'capitulation' originally meant a document arranged in chapters (*capitula*), not a statement of surrender.
- 57 For the *raia*-s, see Nistor, pp. 65–7.
- 58 For what follows on the Tatars, see N. Iorga, *Geschichte des rumänischen Volkes im Rahmen seiner Staatsbildungen*, 2 vols, Gotha, 1905, Vol. 2, pp. 11–13. For a discussion on the Bugeac, see Ion Chirtoagă, 'Evoluția semnificației teritoriale a noțiunii Basarabia', *Revistă de istorie a Moldovei*, Vol. 5, no. 2, 1994, pp. 9–13.
- 59 Boldur, p. 171.
- 60 Ibid., p. 172.
- 61 Orest Subtelny, *Domination of Eastern Europe: Native Nobilities and Foreign Absolutism, 1500–1715*, Kingston and Montreal, 1986, p. 39.
- 62 Keith Hitchins, *The Romanians 1774–1866*, Oxford, 1996, p. 11.
- 63 Subtelny, *Domination of Eastern Europe*, pp. 39–40.
- 64 Ibid., p. 40.
- 65 Nistor, pp. 77–80.
- 66 Demetrius Dvoichenko-Markov, 'The Ukrainian Cossacks in the early Anti-Ottoman Struggle for the Independence of Moldova', *East European Quarterly*, Vol. 14, no. 2, Summer 1980, pp. 241–50.

- 67 N. Iorga, *Histoire des relations russo-roumaines*, Jassy, 1917, p. 42.
- 68 For this and much of what follows, see Păcurariu, pp. 146, 202–37.
- 69 See, for example, Luminița Ilvițchi, *Mănăstirile și schiturile din Basarabia*, Chișinău, 1999, p. 15.
- 70 Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500–1453*, London, 2000, p. 294.
- 71 N. Iorga, *Byzance après Byzance. Continuation de l'histoire de la vie Byzantine*, Bucharest, 1935, pp. 129–54.
- 72 Ekkehard Völkl, *Das rumänische Fürstentum Moldau und die Ostslaven im 15. bis 17. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden, 1975, (hereafter, Völkl), pp. 32–3.
- 73 On ceremonial costume at the court of Vasile Lupu, see Ana Dobjanschi and Victor Simion, *Arta în epoca lui Vasile Lupu*, Bucharest, 1979, pp. 71–7.
- 74 For this and much of what follows, see Constantin Șerban, *Vasile Lupu, domn al Moldovei (1634–1653)*, Bucharest, 1991, pp. 11–121, 181–93.
- 75 Dennis Deletant, 'Some Aspects of the Byzantine Tradition in the Romanian Principalities', in *Studies in Romanian History*, pp. 186–200 (192).
- 76 The monastery of St Michael the Archangel at Peri in Maramureș was founded in the fourteenth century, possibly by Dragoș' son Saș and was dedicated to the patriarchy of Constantinople at the end of the century. The monastery was an important focus of religious life for both the Romanian-speakers and the Ruthenes of Maramureș and surrounding areas, and another example of the long-standing religious links between the two peoples: see, Șt. Ciobanu, *Începuturile scrisului în limba românească*, Bucharest, 1941, pp. 31–7.
- 77 Marin Popescu-Spineni, *Procesul mănăstirilor închinete: contribuții la istoria socială românească*, Bucharest, 1936, pp. 6, 19–20.
- 78 Păcurariu, p. 292.
- 79 Maria Crăciun, 'Building a Romanian Reformed Community in Seventeenth-Century Transylvania', in Maria Crăciun, Ovidiu Ghitta and Graeme Murdock (eds), *Confessional Identity in East-Central Europe*, Aldershot, 2002, pp. 146–72.
- 80 Völkl, p. 83.
- 81 Păcurariu, p. 261.
- 82 Ureche's *Letopisețul Moldovei* ('The Chronicle of Moldova'), produced in the 1640s, covered the history of the principality from its foundation to 1595; Miron Costin's *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei* ('The Chronicle of the Moldovan Lands') covered the period 1595 to 1661 and appeared in the 1670s. Nicolae Costin's *Letopisețul Moldovei de la facerea lumii până la 1601*, was a history of Moldova 'from the creation of the world until 1601', which drew on the works of Ureche and Miron Costin and was produced in 1712.
- 83 Boldur, pp. 227–30; Gheorghe Brătianu, *Die Moldau und ihre historischen Grenzen*, Bucharest, 1941, pp. 24–32.
- 84 I. Nistor, *Der Nationale Kampf in der Bukowina mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Rumänen und Ruthenen historisch beleuchtet*, Bucharest, 1918, pp. 29–30.



- 85 Andrei Eșanu and Valentina Eșanu, 'Începuturile unei noi epoci culturale în Moldova. (Activități culturale și spirituale la mănăstirea Seci în primele decenii ale secolului al XVII-lea)', *Revistă de istorie a Moldovei*, Vol. 7, no. 1, 1996, pp. 5–17.
- 86 Völkl, p. 108.
- 87 Cantemir, p. 297.
- 88 Boldur, p. 277.
- 89 Ibid., p. 365.
- 90 Marin Popescu-Spineni, *Procesul mănăstirilor închinat*, pp. 19, (29).
- 91 For what follows see, Deletant, 'Slavonic Letters in Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania from the Tenth to the Seventeenth centuries', *Studies in Romanian History*, pp. 92–115; Păcurariu, pp. 254–64.
- 92 Ibid., p. 264.
- 93 Deletant, 'Slavonic Letters in Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania', p. 106.
- 94 Cantemir, p. 371.
- 95 Pavel Parasca, 'Antecedente ale înstrăinării Basarabiei până la 1812', *Revistă de istorie a Moldovei*, Vol. 3, no. 3, 1992, pp. 27–32 (28–9).
- 96 Demetrius Dvoichenko-Markov, 'Gheorghe Duca Hospodar of Moldavia and Hetman of the Ukraine, 1678–1684', *Balkan Studies*, Vol. 31, no. 1, 1990, pp. 73–86; Demetrius Dvoichenko-Markov, 'Transnistria: A Rumanian Claim in the Ukraine', *Südost-Forschungen*, Vol. 16, no. 2, 1957, pp. 375–88.
- 97 Nistor, pp. 130–5.
- 98 On the Cantemir campaign and relations with Russia, see Nistor, pp. 137–41.
- 99 Ibid, pp. 142–4.
- 100 For this and much of what follows, see Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity: A Study of the Patriarchate of Constantinople from the Eve of the Turkish Conquest to the Greek War of Independence*, Cambridge, 1968, pp. 360–70.
- 101 N. Iorga, *Histoire des roumains et de la romanité orientale*, Bucharest, 9 vols, 1937–1944, Vol. 7, 1940, see esp. pp. 19–37, 153–70.
- 102 N. Iorga, *Roumains et grecs au cours des siècles*, Bucharest, 1921, pp. 48–50.
- 103 Cyril Mango, 'The Phanariots and the Byzantine Tradition', in Richard Clogg (ed.), *The Struggle for Greek Independence: Essays to Mark the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Greek War of Independence*, London, 1973, pp. 41–66 (45).
- 104 For Nicolae and Constantin Mavrocordat, see Florin Constantiniu, *Constantin Mavrocordat*, Bucharest, 1985. For the Phanariots in general, see Demir M. Dragnev, 'Instaurarea regimului Turco-Fanariot în Moldova', *Revistă de istorie a Moldovei*, Vol. 3, no. 2, 1992, pp. 65–76.
- 105 Perhaps more significant for the Moldovan peasantry was Callimachi's introduction of the potato to the principality.
- 106 William Wilkinson, who served as British consul in Bucharest, observed early in the nineteenth century that 'the modern Greek, introduced by the hospodars, is the language of the court but it is perfectly understood by the boyars, with whom it has become a native tongue'. He added, however, that the use of Greek was less widespread in Moldova than in Wallachia: William Wilkinson, *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia: With Various Political Observations Relating to Them*, London, 1820, (hereafter, Wilkinson), p. 134.

- 107 There was a short-lived Greek press in Constantinople in 1638: Völkl, pp. 25–6.
- 108 Keith Hitchins, *The Romanians, 1774–1866*, pp. 123–4.
- 109 For Iorga's criticism, see his *Roumains et grecs au cours des siècles*, p. 48. For Zallony, see 'Essay on the Fanariots in which the Original Causes of Their Elevation to the Hospodariate of Walachia and Moldavia is Explained; Their Mode of Administration, and the Principal Reasons for Their Fall', in Charles Swan, *Journal of a Voyage up the Mediterranean Principally among the Islands of the Archipelago and in Asia Minor, including Many Interesting Particulars Relative to the Greek Revolution . . . to which is added, An Essay on the Fanariots Translated from the French of Mark Philip Zallony, a Greek*, London, 2 vols, 1826, Vol. 2, pp. 271–422, (hereafter, Zallony).
- 110 For this and much of what follows, see Hitchins, *The Romanians 1774–1866*, pp. 12–25.
- 111 Daniel Chirot, *Social Change in a Peripheral Society: The Creation of a Balkan Colony*, New York, 1976, p. 64
- 112 Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, p. 373.
- 113 Wilkinson, p. 98.
- 114 Ibid., p. 73.
- 115 Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, p. 375.
- 116 Zallony, pp. 294–6 (294).
- 117 Thomas Thornton, *The Present State of Turkey; or a Description of the Political, Civil, and Religious Constitution, Government and Laws of the Ottoman Empire, Together with the Geography, Political and Civil State of the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia*, 2 vols, London, 1809, (hereafter, Thornton), Vol. 2, p. 343. Thornton lived for fourteen years as part of the British trading community in Constantinople and spent fifteen months in Odessa as British consul.
- 118 Ibid., p. 342.
- 119 Zallony, p. 290.
- 120 He devoted a full sixteen pages to this subject, see Wilkinson, pp. 131–47.
- 121 Ibid., p. 131.
- 122 Zallony, p. 297.
- 123 Wilkinson, pp. 75–9 (79). Most of the Turkish fleet was apparently built out of Moldovan timber.
- 124 Stanford J. Shaw, *Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III 1789–1807*, Cambridge, MA, 1971, p. 238.
- 125 Zallony, (pp. 298, 292–3).
- 126 Thornton, pp. 336–7.
- 127 Wilkinson, (pp. 73, 155).
- 128 For much of what follows, see Păcurariu, pp. 416–27.
- 129 Hitchins, *The Romanians, 1774–1866*, p. 123.
- 130 Wilkinson, p. 156.
- 131 As late as 1849 only some 8% of the population of the principalities were engaged in full-time manufacturing or trade: Andrew C. Janos, 'Modernization and Decay in Historical Perspective: The Case of Romania', in Kenneth Jowitt (ed.), *Social Change in Romania, 1860–1940: A Debate on Development in a European Nation*, Berkeley, 1978, pp. 72–116 (75).



- 132 Adam Neale, *Travels Through Some Parts of Germany, Poland, Moldavia, and Turkey*, London, 1818, p. 155. Neale also acted as physician to the British embassy in Constantinople.
- 133 Ibid., pp. 169–70. The wilds of Moldova made a similar impression on Thornton, see Thornton, Vol. 2, pp. 316–26. Even half a century later, the anonymous ‘British Resident of Twenty Years in the East’ was able to have a similar experience of the dangers and delights of nature in Moldova. Following a narrow escape from a pack of wolves which had chased his sledge across a snow-field near Iași, he and his companions entered a ‘dense forest of dark pine leaves, whose branches, bending under the weight of snow, were fringed with icicles, which sparkled like diamonds’. After passing between sheer rock faces, the party once again ‘plunged into a wilderness of everlasting pines’: A British Resident of Twenty Years in the East, *The Frontier Lands of the Christian and the Turk; Comprising Travels in the Regions of the Lower Danube in 1850 and 1851*, 2 vols, London, 1853, Vol. 2, p. 20.
- 134 Freiherr von Campenhausen, *Bemerkungen über Russland besonders einige Provinzen dieses Reichs und ihre Naturgeschichte betreffend, nebst einer kurzgefassten Geschichte der Zaporoger Kosaken, Bessarabiens, der Moldau und der Krimm*, Leipzig, 1807, (hereafter, Freiherr von Campenhausen), esp. pp. 114–82.
- 135 Ibid., p. 131.
- 136 Ibid., p. 142.
- 137 Kelemen Mikes, *Letters of Turkey*, edited and translated by Bernard Adams, London and New York, 2000, p. 205.
- 138 *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, 31 volumes, New York, 1970–1979, Vol. 16, p. 434.
- 139 Wilkinson, p. 159. Similar comments were made by Thornton, see Thornton, Vol. 2, p. 329.
- 140 Adam Neale, *Travels Through Some Parts of Germany, Poland, Moldavia, and Turkey*, p. 170.
- 141 Ibid.
- 142 Thornton, Vol. 2, p. 323.
- 143 Freiherr von Campenhausen, p. 179.
- 144 Zallony, p. 296.
- 145 Freiherr von Campenhausen, pp. 138, 153.
- 146 N. Iorga, *Byzance après Byzance. Continuation de l’histoire de la vie Byzantine*, Bucharest, 1935, pp. 242–5; Andrei Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină în țările române în secolele XVI–XVIII*, Bucharest, 1983, pp. 115–22.
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- 156 N. Iorga, *Veche artă religioasă la români*, Vălenii-de-Munte, 1934, pp. 38–9.
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- 161 Nistor, p. 162. Also included amongst the monasteries were those of Moldovița, Humor, Voroneț, Arbore and Dragomirna with their painted churches.
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- 179 Ion Chirtoagă, 'Evoluția semnificației teritoriale a noțiunii Basarabia', *Revistă de istorie a Moldovei*, Vol, 5, no. 2, 1994, pp. 9–13.
- 180 Cantemir, pp. 83–91.
- 181 Boldur, p. 78.
- 182 Jewsbury, p. 20.
- 183 For what follows on Bessarabian autonomy, see Jewsbury, pp. 58–133.
- 184 Ibid., p. 95.
- 185 For further information on the social groups in Bessarabia under Russian rule, see Zamfir C. Arbure, *Basarabia în secolul XIX*, Bucharest, 1898, pp. 126–40.
- 186 Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, Stanford, 2002, (hereafter, King), p. 23.
- 187 Jewsbury, pp. 135–6.
- 188 King, p. 26.
- 189 Keith Hitchins, *Rumania 1866–1947*, Oxford, 1994, p. 240.
- 190 Quoted in Charles Upson Clark, *Bessarabia: Russia and Roumania on the Black Sea*, New York, 1927, p. 71. Many Moldovans and Ruthenes also fled to Habsburg-controlled Bukovina.
- 191 Ion Chirtoagă, *Din istoria Moldovei de sud-est până în anii '30 al sec. al XIX-lea*, Chișinău, 1999, p. 184.
- 192 Ibid., p. 161.
- 193 King, p. 24.
- 194 According to King, in 1897 the Russians recorded over 55,000 'Ottoman Turks', which probably included some Muslim Turks who had remained despite the Russian annexation of Bessarabia, as well as Muslim Gypsies, Gagauz, and Turkic-speaking Bulgarians: King, p. 24.
- 195 Jewsbury, p. 71.
- 196 For what follows on the Germans in Bessarabia, see Dirk Jachomowski, *Die Umsiedlung der Bessarabien –, Bukowina –, und Dobrudschadeutschen. Von der Volksgruppe in Rumänien zur "Siedlungsbrücke" an der Reichsgrenze*, Munich, 1984, pp. 6–18.
- 197 Hannes Hofbauer and Viorel Roman, *Bukowina, Bessarabien, Moldawien. Vergessenes Land zwischen Westeuropa, Russland und der Türkei*, Vienna, 1993, p. 60; King, p. 24.
- 198 Em. De Martonne, *What I have seen in Bessarabia*, Paris, 1919, pp. 21–2. Professor de Martonne was an ethnographer of the Carpathian region and part of the French delegation at the Paris peace conference in 1919–1920.
- 199 Arbure, *Basarabia în secolul XIX*, p. 111.

- 200 King, p. 23–4; Michael F. Hamm, 'Kishinev: The Character and Development of a Tsarist Frontier Town', in *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 26, no. 1, 1998, pp. 19–37.
- 201 Ibid.
- 202 Chirtoagă, *Din istoria Moldovei de sud-est până în anii '30 al sec. al XIX*, pp. 130, 191.
- 203 Hitchins, *Rumania 1866–1947*, p. 241.
- 204 The Greek revolt was led by Alexandru Ipsilanti, leader of the Etairia movement which sought to liberate the Balkans from Turkish rule. The revolt began on Moldovan soil. Tudor Vladimirescu was initially connected with the Etairia movement, but subsequently led an anti-Phanariot revolt in Wallachia. Ipsilanti and Vladimirescu had served as officers in the Russian army. Both hoped for Russian support in their endeavours and both were disappointed in their hopes.
- 205 For the withdrawal of autonomy from Bessarabia, see Jewsbury, pp. 131–55.
- 206 For the works printed by Bodoni and Sulima, his successor, see Ștefan Ciobanu, *Cultura românească în Basarabia sub stăpânirea rusă*, Chișinău, 1923 (hereafter, Ciobanu), pp. 36–67.
- 207 Paul and Zamfira Mihail, *Acte în limba română tipărite în Basarabia. I. (1812–1830)*, Bucharest, 1993, p. xxi.
- 208 Nistor, p. 254.
- 209 Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930*, Ithaca and London, 1995, p. 94.
- 210 Nistor, pp. 258–9.
- 211 Nicolae Ciachir, *Basarabia sub stăpânire țaristă (1812–1917)*, Bucharest, 1992, p. 64.
- 212 Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, p. 100.
- 213 Boldur, pp. 450–7; Ion G. Pelivan, *Bessarabia under the Russian Rule*, Paris, 1920, pp. 30–1. On the eve of the First World War, of the 468 noble families in Bessarabia only 138 were indigenous: Hitchins, *Rumania 1866–1947*, p. 240.
- 214 Ibid, p. 245.
- 215 Charles Upson Clark, *Bessarabia*, pp. 90–91.
- 216 N. Iorga, *Geschichte des rumänischen Volkes im Rahmen seiner Staatsbildungen*, Vol. 2, p. 448.
- 217 Pelivan, *Bessarabia under the Russian Rule*, pp. 22–3. Pelivan describes Pavel as '... the worst tyrant in ecclesiastical garments that there ever was'.
- 218 Ciobanu, p. 147.
- 219 Charles Upson Clark, *Bessarabia*, p. 105.
- 220 Prince Sergei Dmitriyevich Urussov, *Memoirs of a Russian Governor*, translated by Herman Rosental, London and New York, 1908, p. 86.
- 221 Charles Upson Clark, *Bessarabia*, p. 108.
- 222 For a full account of the Inochentie movement, see Nicolae Popovschi, *Mișcarea dela Balta sau Inochentizmul în Basarabia. Contribuții la istoria vieții religioase a românilor din Basarabia*, Chișinău, 1926.
- 223 Paul and Zamfira Mihail, *Acte în limba română tipărite în Basarabia*, p. xliii.
- 224 Arbure, *Basarabia în secolul XIX*, p. 531.



- 225 Paul Mihailovici, *Tipărituri românești în Basarabia dela 1812 până la 1918*, Bucharest, 1941, pp. 152–3, Doc. no. 266.
- 226 Ibid., p. 185, Doc. no. 290.
- 227 Ibid., p. 33, Doc. no. 38; p. 155, Doc. no. 270; p. 77, Doc. no. 128.
- 228 Ciobanu, pp. 109, 172–83.
- 229 Ion Pelivan, *The Union of Bessarabia with her Mother-Country Roumania*, Paris, 1920, pp. 7–8.
- 230 Ciobanu, pp. 121–34.
- 231 For what follows, see King, pp. 28–31.
- 232 Pelivan, *The Union of Bessarabia with her Mother-Country Roumania*, p. 11.
- 233 King, p. 22.
- 234 Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, p. 95.
- 235 Boris Buzilă, *Din istoria vieții bisericești din Basarabia (1812–1918; 1918–1944)*, Bucharest and Chișinău, 1996, pp. 239–61.
- 236 Hofbauer and Roman, *Bukowina, Bessarabien, Moldawien*, p. 75.
- 237 Captain John Kaba, *Politico-Economic Review of Basarabia*, no place of publication, 1919, p. 27.
- 238 For a discussion on Stere, and other ‘pan-Romanianists’, see Eugen Șt. Holban, *Contribuția Basarabiei la cultura românească. Toponimie și identitate națională*, Chișinău, 1997, pp. 14–118.
- 239 Ciobanu, pp. 273–84, 326–7.
- 240 Hitchins, *Rumania 1866–1947*, p. 243.
- 241 Kaba, *Politico-Economic Review of Basarabia*, pp. 13–15.
- 242 Ștefan Ciobanu, *Chișinăul*, no place of publication, 1996, p. 23. This work was originally published in 1925.
- 243 Urussov, *Memoirs of a Russian Governor*, pp. 96–7.
- 244 Em. de Martonne, *What I have seen in Bessarabia*, p. 16.
- 245 Kaba, *Politico-Review of Basarabia*, pp. 13–15.
- 246 Urussov, *Memoirs of a Russian Governor*, pp. 70–3.
- 247 King, p. 42.
- 248 Urussov, *Memoirs of a Russian Governor*, pp. 27–63 (63).
- 249 Ibid., p. 91.
- 250 Andrei Popovici, *The Political Status of Bessarabia*, Washington D. C., 1931, pp. 121–2.
- 251 P. Cazacu, *The Truth about the Question of Bessarabia*, Bucharest, 1926, pp. 15–53 (16) (53).
- 252 Ion Țurcanu, *Unirea Basarabia cu România 1918. Preludii, premise, realizări*, Chișinău, 1998, (hereafter, Țurcanu), pp. 27, 41, 70.
- 253 Quoted in Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, p. 96.
- 254 Irina Livezeanu, ‘Moldavia, 1917–1990: Nationalism and Internationalism Then and Now’, in *Armenian Review*, Vol. 43, no. 2–3/170–171, Summer/Autumn 1990, pp. 153–93 (158–61).
- 255 Onisifor Ghibu, *În vîltoarea revoluției rusești. Însemnări din Basarabia anului 1917*, Bucharest, 1993, p. 32; Pantelimon Halipa (sic) and Anatolie Moraru, *Testament pentru urmași*, Chișinău, 1991, pp. 108–9.
- 256 Țurcanu, pp. 11, 27.
- 257 Ghibu, *În vîltoarea revoluției rusești*, pp. 29–32.

- 258 N. Iorga's *Neamul românesc în Basarabia* of 1905 and *Basarabia noastră. Scrisă după 100 ani de la răpirea ei de către ruși* of 1912 have been republished in Iordan Datcu (ed.), *N. Iorga, Neamul românesc în Basarabia*, Bucharest, 1995. For Eminescu's articles written for *Timpul* in 1878, see I. Crețu, *Bucovina și Basarabia. Studiu istorico-politic*, Bucharest, 1941.
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- 265 Paul Cernovodeanu, *Basarabia. Drama unei provincii istorice românești în context politic internațional (1806–1920)*, Bucharest, 1993, p. 150.
- 266 Țurcanu, pp. 152–9; King, p. 33.
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- 270 King, p. 35.
- 271 Hitchins, *Rumania 1866–1947*, p. 277.
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- 273 Hamilton Fish Armstrong, *The New Balkans*, New York, 1926, p. 147. The Romanian government passed a decree-law on 15 December 1918 for the full expropriation of crown lands, lands held by institutions, absentee landlords and foreigners and all private property over 500 hectares.
- 274 Țurcanu, p. 8.
- 275 A. N. Krupenski and A. Ch. Schmidt, *What is the "Bessarabian Question"*, no place of publication, no date, p. 5.
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- 277 Ibid., p. 290. Charles King has described the treaty as 'legally worthless': King, p. 39.
- 278 For most of what follows on interwar Bessarabia, see Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, pp. 89–127 and King, pp. 41–51.
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- 280 Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, p. 123.
- 281 Ibid., p. 99.
- 282 Ibid., p. 90.
- 283 Georges Tataresco, *Bessarabie et Moscou. Discours prononcé a la chambre des députés de Bucarest le 9 décembre 1925*, Bucharest, 1925, pp. 5–35.



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- 285 Nicolae Enciu, 'Mișcarea migratoare a populației rurale din Basarabia (1918–1940)', *Revistă de istorie a Moldovei*, Vol. 6, no. 2, 1995, pp. 15–24 (16).
- 286 Ciobanu, *Chișinăul*, p. 51.
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- 288 Cantemir, p. 365.
- 289 Boldur, pp. 227–30; Gheorghe Brătianu, *Die Moldau und ihre historischen Grenzen*, pp. 24–32.
- 290 Dyer, *The Romanian Dialect of Moldova*, p. 35.
- 291 Livezeanu, 'Moldavia, 1917–1990: Nationalism and Internationalism Then and Now', p. 158.
- 292 Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, p. 120.
- 293 Suveica, 'Integrarea administrativă a Basarabiei în România (1918–1925)', pp. 125–35.
- 294 For the church in interwar, Basarabia, see Buzilă, *Din istoria vieții bisericești din Basarabia*, pp. 209–52.
- 295 For what follows on the economy in interwar Bessarabia, see Ion Agrigoroaiei and Gheorghe Palade, *Basarabia în cadrul României întregite 1918–1940*, Chișinău, pp. 81–7.
- 296 Charles Upson Clark, *United Roumania*, New York, 1932, pp. 89–90.
- 297 Agrigoroaiei and Palade, *Basarabia în cadrul României întregite*, p. 84.
- 298 Holban, *Contribuția Basarabiei la cultura românească*, p. 6.
- 299 Agrigoroaiei and Palade, *Basarabia în cadrul României întregite*, p. 99.
- 300 Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, p. 123.
- 301 Charles Upson Clark, *Bessarabia*, p. 261.
- 302 For what follows on Soviet policies in the MASSR, see King, pp. 51–88.
- 303 Ibid., p. 85.
- 304 For much of what follows on interwar Romania's diplomacy with regard to Bessarabia, see Rebecca Haynes, *Romanian Policy towards Germany, 1936–1940*, London, 2000, esp. pp. 2–6, 99–166.
- 305 Ibid., p. 109.
- 306 Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe (Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest), Fond 71/Germania, Vol. 80, pp. 129–34, Letter Addressed to His Excellency Ribbentrop, Reich Foreign Minister, by the Prime Minister, I. Gigurtu, on 27 August 1940.
- 307 Ion Constantin, *România, marile puteri și problema Basarabiei*, Bucharest, 1995, pp. 146–54.
- 308 Nicolae Iorga, *Românii de peste Nistru. Lămuriri pentru a-i ajuta în lupta lor*, Iași, 1918, pp. 3–35 (8); Ion I. Nistor, 'Românii Transnistrieni', Extras din "Codrul Cosminului", *Buletinul institutului de istorie și limbă dela Universitatea din Cernăuți*, 1925, pp. 4–22.
- 309 Emil Diaconescu, *Românii din răsărit: Transnistria*, Iași, 1942, pp. 13–4, (121). See also, Constantin C. Giurescu, *Populația moldovenească dela gura Niprului și a Bugului în veacurile XVII și XVIII*, Craiova, 1942.

- 310 Vasile Netea, *Transnistria*, Bucharest, 1943, pp. 11–20 (14).
- 311 Diaconescu, *România din răsărit*, p. 155; Antim Nica, *Viață religioasă în Transnistria*, Chișinău, 1943, pp. 5–17.
- 312 Ibid., pp. 69–75.
- 313 King p. 94; Ciobanu, *La Bessarabie Sa Population — son passé — sa culture*, pp. 42–3: in 1930 Hotin had 137,348 Moldovans, 53,453 Russians and 163,267 Ukrainians. Cetatea Albă had 62,949 Moldovans, 58,922 Russians and 70,095 Ukrainians. Ismail in 1930 had 72,020 Moldovans, 66,987 Russians but only 10,655 Ukrainians.
- 314 As Ronald Hill has written elsewhere with regard to Tiraspol's position within the post-war MSSR, the city 'is the only large settlement within Moldavia's present day borders that has always been within either the [Russian] Empire, or the Soviet Union'. See, Ronald J. Hill, *Soviet Political Elites: The Case of Tiraspol*, London, 1977, p. 14. Having been capital of the interwar MASSR, Tiraspol was subordinated to Chișinău in 1941.
- 315 King, p. 101. These statistics are from a census of 1941.
- 316 George Ciorănescu, *Bessarabia: Disputed Land between East and West*, Bucharest, 1993, p. 207.
- 317 King, p. 96; Mihai Gribincea, *Agricultural Collectivization in Moldavia: Basarabia during Stalinism, 1944–1950*, Boulder, CO, 1996, pp. 71–97.
- 318 Hofbauer and Roman, *Bukowina, Bessarabien, Moldawien*, p. 103; Wim P. van Meurs, *The Bessarabian Question in Communist Historiography: Nationalist and Communist Politics and History-Writing*, Boulder, CO, 1994, p. 123.
- 319 Ciorănescu, *Bessarabia: Disputed Land between East and West*, p. 214.
- 320 King, p. 101.
- 321 Pål Kolstø and Andrei Malgin, 'The Transnistrian Republic: A Case of Politicized Regionalism', in *Nationality Papers*, Vol. 26, no. 1, 1998, pp. 103–27 (106).
- 322 For a detailed account of Soviet language policies in the MASSR and MSSR, see Michael Bruchis, *One Step Back, Two Steps Forward: On the Language Policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the National Republics: (Moldavian: A Look Back, a Survey, and Perspectives, 1924–1980)*, Boulder, CO, 1982.
- 323 Charles E. King, 'Soviet Policy in the Annexed East European Borderlands: Language, Politics and Ethnicity in Moldova' in Odd Arne Westad, Sven Holtsmark, and Iver B. Neumann (eds), *The Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, 1945–89*, London, 1994, pp. 63–93.
- 324 Dennis Deletant, 'Language Policy and Linguistic Trends in Soviet Moldavia', in *Studies in Romanian History*, pp. 304–31 (314).
- 325 For what follows, see King, pp. 106–16 (107).
- 326 Ibid., p. 108.
- 327 Van Meurs, *The Bessarabian Question in Communist Historiography*, p. 229.
- 328 Victor Cheresteșiu, 'Marele învățaț, om politic și luptător activ pentru prietenia româno-rusă, *Studii revistă de istorie și filosofie*, Vol. 6, no. 4, October-December 1953, pp. 75–89.



- 329 See, for example, George Ciorănescu's comment on post-war russification in Moldova in which he claims that 'the number of Russians is growing faster than that of the other nationalities of the republic, despite the fact that the Russians are as alien there as the French in Africa'. See, Ciorănescu, *Bessarabia: Disputed Land between East and West*, p. 197.
- 330 Adrian Pop, 'When the Mouse Challenges the Cat: Bessarabia in Post-War Soviet-Romanian Relations', in Westad, Holtsmark and Neumann (eds), *The Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*, pp. 94–109 (101).
- 331 For the growth of the Moldovan national movement and the development of the Transnistrian dispute, see King, pp. 120–44, 178–208.
- 332 Michael Kirkwood, 'Soviet Language Laws: 1989–1990', in Peter J. S. Duncan and Martyn Rady (eds), *Towards a New Community: Culture and Politics in Post-Totalitarian Europe*, London, 1993, pp. 147–60 (156).
- 333 See, for example, Victor Crăciun, who called for the union of Moldova with Romania, as well as the annexation of Bessarabian lands lost to Ukraine in 1940, together with northern Bukovina, in *Pierdem Basarabia? Liga culturală pentru unitatea românilor de pretutindeni*, no place of publication, 1992, p. 112.
- 334 Charles King, 'Who are the Moldovans?', in Dennis Deletant (ed.), *Occasional Papers in Romanian Studies*, No.1, London, 1995, pp. 61–9 (65).
- 335 Tamara Căraus, 'How Can One Be a Moldovan?', lecture given at SSEES-UCL on 27 February 2002.

Map 1 The Principality of Moldova, Bessarabia and Bukovina, 1812





Map 2 The Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR), 1944–1991



ROMANIA



Border between  
UKRAINIAN AND MOLDOVAN SSR



TRANSNISTRIA

## The Holocaust in Transnistria: An Overview in the Light of Recent Research

Dennis Deletant

The Holocaust in Romania was unlike the Holocaust in other parts of Europe and the Soviet Union. In the first place, the murder of Jews there was carried out principally by the Romanian authorities. Romania under the military dictatorship of Marshal Ion Antonescu (1941–1944) independently implemented mass slaughter of Jews as a sovereign German ally. Secondly, the deaths of Jews at the hands of the Romanians was the result not only of the systematic, mechanical killing of Jews, but also of deportation and its consequences. More than 15,000 Jews in Bessarabia and Bukovina were shot by the Romanian and German army in the summer of 1941, and Romanian forces alone put to death an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 Jews in Odessa in a similar manner in October in that same year. Of the 147,000 Jews who were deported from Bukovina and Bessarabia between 1941 and 1943 to Transnistria at least 90,000 died, the majority of typhus and starvation. During the same period, a further 170,000 local Ukrainian Jews are estimated to have perished in the same province.<sup>1</sup> These figures give the Antonescu regime the sinister distinction of being responsible for the largest number of deaths of Jews after Hitler's Germany — the deportation of 500,000 Jews in Hungary to the death camps in Poland was carried out after the German occupation of that country on 19 March 1944.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, Romania's 'Jewish policy' was independent of Germany. Proof of this is the fact that Antonescu changed his mind in the summer of 1942 about acceding to German requests that the remaining Jewish population of Romania — from the Banat, southern Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldova — be deported to the extermination camps in Poland.

For the English-reading public, access to the horrors of Antonescu's treatment of the Jews and Gypsies is now provided for the first time by



Radu Ioanid's study *The Holocaust in Romania*.<sup>3</sup> His task has been facilitated by the hundreds of thousands of pages of documentation on the subject which the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) has assembled since 1993 from Romania and Ukraine under the guidance of Ioanid and Paul Shapiro. Some of this material was used by Jean Ancel in a remarkable three-volume work on Transnistria published in 1998, but this is in Romanian. Other eminent scholars, such as Randolph Braham and Paul Shapiro, have in recent years made incisive incursions into the fate of the Jews from northern Bukovina and Bessarabia. A major reference-work in English on the Romanian administration in Transnistria remains Alexander Dallin's study on Odessa between 1941 and 1944, written as a RAND report in 1957 and published for the first time in 1998. Pioneering as he was at the time, Dallin did not enjoy the cooperation of the Soviet or Romanian authorities and was unable to consult the files now available in the USHMM's archive. By drawing on this rich source of documentation — which is currently being consolidated by the USHMM with fresh material — Ioanid has provided a path-breaking synthesis, cataloguing and describing Antonescu's systematic measures to drive and eliminate the Jews and Gypsies from Romania. This paper offers an overview of Ioanid's work and complements it with an appreciation of the Holocaust in Transnistria which this author was able to formulate as a result of his own research into the subject at the USHMM from 2000 to 2001.

Just as Antonescu's solution to the 'Jewish problem' differed from that of Hitler, so too did his anti-semitism. Whereas for Hitler Jews were a deadly disease, infesting and debilitating the Aryan race, for Antonescu they were unpatriotic and disloyal to Romania, as well as being economic exploiters. But the greatest danger which the Jews posed to Romania in Antonescu's mind was their predilection for bolshevism. The epithet 'Judeo-Bolshevik' was frequently employed by Antonescu and his vice-president, Mihai Antonescu, in their speeches to characterize Jews, especially the Russian-speaking ones in Bessarabia — the Jews in Bukovina were predominantly Yiddish- and German-speakers.

Antonescu's obsession with the bolshevik menace drove his policy towards the Jews. The vast majority of those living in the provinces bordering on, and occupied by, the Soviet Union between 1940 and 1941 — Bessarabia and Bukovina — were deported to Transnistria, as well as those from the county of Dorohoi in northern Moldova, and more than sixty per cent of them were murdered or died of disease and starvation. Amongst Transnistrian Jews, more than eighty per cent are estimated to have perished. On the other hand, the Jews in the Old Kingdom of

Romania — in the provinces of Wallachia and Moldova — and in southern Transylvania, which remained in Romanian hands after the Vienna Award of August 1940 gave the northern half to Hungary, were more assimilated, and were deemed by Antonescu to be less communist in their propensities, and were, therefore, largely spared.

Transnistria was the name given by the Antonescu regime to the region of Ukraine between the rivers Dnestr and the Bug, which it occupied following Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. As a separate administrative entity Transnistria had no historical pedigree; it had never been ruled by Romanians and in the population, put at two and a half millions in the Soviet census of 1926, the Romanian element amounted to only ten per cent. The majority of its inhabitants were Ukrainians and Russians, but there was a significant Jewish population of about 300,000.

Under Antonescu Transnistria was the graveyard of between 200,000 and 250,000 Jews, and for up to 20,000 Gypsies. Most of these deaths resulted from inhuman treatment and a callous disregard for life rather than from industrialized killing. The forced marches of Jewish deportees — including young, old and sick — to the eastern extremity of Transnistria with the intention of driving them across the River Bug into German hands, the murder by Romanian and Ukrainian guards of those unable to keep up with the columns, the massacre by the Germans of those who did cross, the eventual refusal in the late summer of 1941 by the Germans to accept any more for fear of spreading typhus beyond the Bug, the consequent herding of Jews into makeshift camps without proper food or health care, these actions resulted in the initial wave of deaths through malnutrition and disease in the autumn and winter of 1941, and were the hallmark of the fate in Antonescu's hands of Romanian Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina, and of local Ukrainian Jews. Later, several thousand Jews were shot in 1942 and 1943, largely by SS units in the south-eastern part of the province who were aided by the German colonists there.

For those Jews who survived — both Romanian and Ukrainian — administrative incompetence and endemic corruption plagued their existence, but these very features of Romanian rule offered a chance of salvation to those who were fit enough to withstand the physical and material torments of life in Transnistria. To this we should add the particular human factor, borne out by witness statements at the war-crimes tribunals held at the end of the war in Romania: that actions against — and in a few cases — to the benefit of the deportees depended a great deal on the personality of the camp commandant.



In examining the fate of the Jews at the hands of the Romanians and Germans in Transnistria a distinction should be made between the Romanian Jews deported to Transnistria from Bessarabia and Bukovina after these areas were reannexed by Romania in July 1941, and the fate of the local Jews in Transnistria itself.

### *Deportation*

According to Mihai Antonescu, the Romanian vice-president and a distant relative of the Marshal, the decision to deport the Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina was not taken at any cabinet meeting but 'was taken by the Marshal when he was in [Romanian] Moldova, near the front'. Under questioning on 17 April 1946 before his trial, Mihai Antonescu declared that Ion Antonescu took the decision 'to begin the deportation of Jews from Cernăuți and from Chișinău' while he was in Iași' (at the beginning of July 1941, it would seem).<sup>4</sup> On 8 July 1941, Mihai Antonescu reiterated his support for the expulsion of the Jews. At a meeting of the cabinet over which he presided in the absence of Ion Antonescu, he declared: 'At the risk of not being understood by some traditionalists who may still be amongst you, I am for the forced migration of the whole Jewish population in Bessarabia and Bukovina, which must be expelled *over the frontier* [author's italics]. Similarly, I am for the forced migration of the Ukrainian population which has no place here at this time'.<sup>5</sup> In practice, expulsion meant driving the Jews across the River Dnestr into German-controlled territory. It is also worth noting that Mihai Antonescu spoke here of '*the whole Jewish population in Bessarabia and Bukovina*' [author's italics]. An insight into Ion Antonescu's motives is provided by his response to two petitions sent to him in October 1941 by Wilhelm Filderman, the head of the 'Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania', protesting at the deportations. Replying on 19 October, Antonescu asked Filderman to think of events of the previous summer during the Romanian withdrawal from Bessarabia and Bukovina: 'What did you do last year when you heard of the Jews' behaviour in Bessarabia and Bukovina towards our withdrawing troops who up to then had protected the peace and wealth of those Jews ? I shall remind you. Even before that appearance of the Soviet troops the Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina, whom you defend, spat on our officers, ripped off their epaulettes, tore their uniforms, and when they could they beat our soliders to death in a cowardly fashion. We have proof. These same bastards welcomed the Soviet troops with flowers and celebrated their arrival with wild enthusiasm'.<sup>6</sup>

Although there was allegedly some photographic evidence of the above accusations, and there were several reports of such incidents from the Romanian troops withdrawn from the two provinces,<sup>7</sup> the behaviour described was not representative of most Jews, especially the more wealthy amongst them who had every reason to fear for their fortunes at the hands of a communist regime and showed that concern by withdrawing with the Romanian forces. Moreover, if retaliation against the Jews for their treatment of the withdrawing Romanian forces from the provinces in June 1940 was a motive for deportation, then it made no sense to include the Jews from southern Bukovina and Dorohoi county in northern Moldova which were not annexed by the Soviet Union and remained part of Romania.

Nevertheless, at the beginning of August Romanian gendarmes began to drive columns of Jews on foot from the whole of Bukovina and Bessarabia towards the north of the latter province and over the Dnestr into what was at the time German-controlled territory. Those that had the opportunity took with them clothes, food, money and jewellery. The Germans were unwilling to accept large numbers of them and sent them back. The Romanian gendarmes in Soroca — in northern Bessarabia — reported on 5 August that there were about 20,000 Jews from Hotin and Storojineţ whom the Germans had refused to receive at Moghilev. Three days later the gendarme inspectorate in Cernăuţi telegraphed that 20,000 from the county of Hotin had been driven across the Dnestr but that the Germans had begun on 7 August to send back from Ukraine everyone from Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, irrespective of their ethnic background.<sup>8</sup> In the words of a German SD report, the Jews were 'chased back and forth until they dropped . . . Old men and women lay along the road at short distances from each other. . .'.<sup>9</sup>

With nowhere to send the Jews, the Romanian gendarmerie set up transit camps at Secureni, Edineţi, and Vertujeni into which more than 50,000 Jews were herded. Poor sanitation, a shortage of water and a lack of food quickly led to the outbreak of disease. The mortality rate was high. The dumping-ground for these Jews, once the military situation permitted, was Transnistria. In a cabinet meeting of 6 September 1941, Antonescu declared that 'we have tens of thousands of Jews whom I intend to cast into Russia'.<sup>10</sup> At the beginning of October 1941, the deportation of the occupants of the transit camps to Transnistria began. The deportation ceased in mid-November. About 25,000 Jews were left in the ghetto of Cernăuţi and some 500 in Chişinău. In early summer 1942, the deportation of 10,000 of the Cernăuţi Jews and those in Chişinău resumed.<sup>11</sup>

Jews were not the only victims of deportation. It was a hybrid of social and racial criteria that drove Antonescu's policy towards the Gypsies.



Their deportation was ordered in May 1942 and carried out in August. Gypsies 'without visible means of support' and with a 'criminal record' were rounded up in many areas by the police and deported by train to Transnistria. By and large, only Gypsies in the above categories were seized. In some counties Antonescu's order fell on deaf ears; in the Banat, for example, in western Romania, scarcely any Gypsies were rounded up since the police regarded them as valuable members of the community and refused to take action against them. But in other areas the order was carried out. Almost 25,000 Gypsies were deported — by train — with the opprobrium of 'criminals' attached to them, and such were the appalling conditions in the villages in which they were settled that many of them contracted disease and perished. Others were shot by the Romanian gendarmerie, and by SS troops based in Golta county in south-eastern Transnistria. How many Gypsies died is impossible to tell, but the number registered as returning from Transnistria in May 1944 was no more than 6,000, while several hundred more arrived in Bucharest from the province later in the summer. There is much uncertainty as to the size of the pre-war Gypsy population — the 1930 census gives a figure of less than 300,000 — but it is clear that a very high proportion of those deported died.

### *The Jewish Aid Committee*

No greater contribution was made to the alleviation of the living conditions of the Jewish deportees in Transnistria than by the Romanian Jews themselves. An Aid Committee (*Comisiunea de Ajutorare*) was established in February 1942 to distribute food and clothing to the Jews.<sup>12</sup> It was technically part of the Central Jewish Office in Romania (*Centrala Evreilor din România*) but was in effect driven by an unauthorized Jewish council set up by the leading Jews in Romania, most notably Wilhelm Filderman, formerly head of the 'Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania' (FJCR), Mișu Benvenisti, a leading Zionist, and Chief Rabbi Alexandru Șafran.

The Central Jewish Office was a government-controlled institution set up by Antonescu on 16 December 1941 to replace the FJCR. It was charged, amongst other things, with the exclusive representation of the interests of Romanian Jewry, with the organization of Jewish 'work projects' and other forms of forced labour, and with the creation and updating of files on all Romanian Jews, including the issue of photo identity cards that Jews had to carry. Its head was Radu Lecca.

This constellation of Jewish agencies was in all respects unique in Europe. First, the existence of an official government body to regulate Jewish affairs was without parallel; secondly, the idea that an aid committee could function under a regime that was bent on removing unwanted Jews seems fantastic, not to mention the fact that the committee was in inspiration and action Jewish and was subordinate to an illegal Jewish Council; and thirdly, the acceptance by Antonescu of direct personal communication with Filderman, as an unofficial spokesman for the Jews despite the disbandment of the FJCR — they exchanged letters and held meetings to discuss the plight of the Jews — all of these points underline the ambivalence of Antonescu's treatment of the Jews.

When news of the ordeals experienced by the Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina reached Filderman, he appealed to Antonescu to change his mind. His plea fell on deaf ears. Subsequent representations from Filderman and others to allow the dispatch of aid and money to the deportees by the Jewish community in Romania were more successful. On 10 December 1941, Antonescu's decision to allow the FJCR to send money and medicines to the deportees in Transnistria was relayed to the relevant government bodies. But it took several months for Alexianu and the Central Jewish Office — the successor to the FJCR — to come up with a solution as to the means by which the aid should be sent. It was agreed in March 1942 that the monies could be sent through the National Bank in Bucharest in the account of the Transnistrian government and that the medicines be sent to the prefect's office in Moghilev from where they would be distributed by the province's drug administration.<sup>13</sup> Initially, sums were deposited individually by relatives and friends of the deportees but this practice caused such confusion that Antonescu subsequently ordered that all monies should be channeled through the Aid Committee.

Unfortunately for the deportees, they often failed to receive the sums of money sent to them, or were short-changed. A similar fate occurred with monies sent through — illegal — couriers, most of whom were Romanian officials or gendarmerie personnel stationed in Transnistria. Several of the latter were court-martialled for acting as go-betweens and sentenced to short terms of imprisonment. But it was not only Romanian officials who were deemed guilty of corruption. The Aid Committee received complaints that a number of ghetto heads sold the food and clothing which had been sent in their care to Jews in the ghetto, or in some cases embezzled the funds transmitted through the Central Jewish Office.<sup>14</sup>

A significant change took place in the method of distributing aid in 1943. Acting on the recommendations of a delegation of Romanian Jews, headed by Fred Șaraga, which visited several ghettos and camps in



Transnistria between 1–14 January 1943, the Aid Committee targeted their assistance at specific ghetto heads who enjoyed the trust of their communities.<sup>15</sup> As a result, there was a significant increase in the amounts of money and goods that reached their intended recipients. That said, it should be borne in mind that the local Ukrainian Jews received no such assistance. Many of them watched enviously as their fellows from Bukovina and Bessarabia were given the means of making their lives just a little more bearable.

### *The Massacres at Bogdanovka, Golta County*

There were approximately two hundred camps and ghettos in Transnistria; they had several things in common: they were cold, crowded, the food-supply was meagre and in many cases at starvation level, they were ravaged by typhus, and the death rate, particularly in the period between October 1941 and the spring of 1942, was calamitous. In the thirty months of their existence the camps and ghettos witnessed the deaths of tens of thousands of Jews. Fear of the spread of typhus to Romanian and German soldiers led to several cases of pre-meditated mass murder by the Romanian authorities, the most notorious being the killings at the Bogdanovka camp in Golta county.

The original areas for concentrating the Jews on the River Bug, in preparation for their expulsion into the German-controlled area of Ukraine, were listed as Mitkin, Pechora, and Rogozna in northern Transnistria, the town of Obodovka and the village of Balanovka in the county of Balta, Bobrick, Krivoye Ozero, and Bogdanovka, a large state farm in the county of Golta. However, the large numbers of deportees involved created huge logistical problems for the Romanian authorities who had made no plans for feeding or caring for the Jews either en route or at their destination. A typhus epidemic amongst the Jews led the Transnistrian government to divert all Jewish convoys in southern Transnistria to the county of Golta. The prefect, Modest Isopescu, a lieutenant-colonel in the gendarmerie, was ordered to concentrate the convoys around the Bogdanovka state farm and by November 1941 some 28,000 Jews had been assembled. On 13 November, Isopescu sent a confidential report to Alexianu describing the situation in his county:

When I took over the county I found several camps of kikes (*jidani* in Romanian), some of whom had been assembled in the towns here, while the great majority had been sent from across the Dnestr. Approximately 15,000 had gathered in the village of Vazdovca in the district of Liubashevka, a Romanian commune, while

there were about 1,500 each in Krivoye Ozero and Bogdanovka. Those in Vazdovka were stricken with typhus and about 8,000 died, including those who died of starvation. The mayor of the commune appealed in despair for permission to move them because of the continual danger of infection. I ordered the 20th Infantry Regiment, which was quartered there, to place a guard on them so that the civilian population did not come into contact with them, and to transport them to Bogdanovka, a village on the banks of the Bug, with the intention of sending them across the Bug. Those from Krivoye Ozero were sent to Bogdanovka as well, and were placed in the pig sties of the state farm.

Before the convoy of *jidani* from Vazdovka arrived, 9,000 kikes were sent from Odessa, so that today, with those who were already there and those who arrived in the meantime, there are 11,000 *jidani* in pig sties which could not hold 7,000 pigs. The mayor of the village and the manager of the state farm came to me today in despair because they were told that there were 40,000 more *jidani* on the way from Odessa.

Since the state farm cannot hold them all, and those outside the sties kill those inside in order to take their places, and the police and gendarmes cannot keep pace with the burials, and since the waters of the Bug are being used as drinking-water, an epidemic will soon spread over the entire area.

They are not fit for labour, for of the 300 brought to Golta for construction work almost 200 have died, while another 50 are dying despite being relatively well-cared for. The majority have tuberculosis, and suffer from dysentery and typhus.

To avoid contamination of the region we beg you to give the order immediately that no more *jidani* should be sent to this area. I hope to be able to soon send those already here across the Bug, so that we will soon have the air completely clean. I ask, however, that we should not be infected again by new convoys of *jidani*.<sup>16</sup>

It goes without saying that the herding of Jews into pig sties was the ultimate debasement of their dignity.

Isopescu's difficulties had been aggravated by events in Odessa. On 22 October 1941, the former NKVD headquarters in Odessa on Engels Street, occupied by the Romanians as their military headquarters, was blown up by Soviet agents. Romanian records show that there were 61 victims, including General Ioan Glogojanu, the city commandant, 16 officers, 35 soldiers and 9 civilians. Four German naval officers and two interpreters were among the dead. Marshal Antonescu ordered swift, indiscriminate and bloody retaliation, the mass murder of innocent civilians: for every Romanian and German officer killed, 200 communists were to be hanged; for every soldier, 100 communists. During the night of 22 October, the military authorities carried out the order and by daybreak 450 Jews, considered communists, were left hanging on the streets of Odessa. In addition, about 50,000 Jews were force-marched to Dalnik, about 8 kilometres outside the city, to be executed. On the intervention of Odessa's mayor, Gherman Pântea, and General Nicolae Macici, the column was sent back to Odessa, but not before those Jews at the head of the column were herded into four large sheds and machine-



gunned to death, after which the sheds were set on fire. How many Jews were killed in this way is not known exactly but a figure of 20,000 was mentioned at Macici's trial in May 1945. This is corroborated by a German army report that, 'on the morning of the 23rd, about 19,000 Jews were shot on a square in the port, surrounded by a wooden fence. Their corpses were doused with gasoline and burned'.<sup>17</sup> This gruesome retaliation was succeeded by an order, issued on 7 November 1941, requiring all male Jews between 18 and 50 years of age to report to Odessa jail within 48 hours, and five days later Governor Alexianu issued ordinance no. 23 providing for the establishment of ghettos and concentration camps. Several thousand Odessa Jews were moved to Bogdanovka.

Isopescu still hoped that the Jews would be sent across the Bug into the hands of the Germans. In his report of 19 November, he noted: 'There are still Jews hiding out in the villages. I ordered searches so that they could be brought to Bogdanovka where we could concentrate them in one place before transferring them over the Bug, and we are negotiating with the Germans to this end'.<sup>18</sup> By the end of November the situation at Bogdanovka, and at the other improvised camps at Domanovka and Acmecețka, had reached crisis point through overcrowding and the spread of typhus which had reached endemic proportions amongst the inmates. At Bogdanovka there were about 48,000 Jews, most of them from Odessa, and around 7,000 from southern Bessarabia. Domanovka held around 18,000 Jews, gathered from three districts in the south of Transnistria, while the Acmecețka camp, located on an abandoned pig-farm halfway between the other two camps, had some 4,000 sick and elderly Jews, as well as women, described by the gendarmes as unfit for labour.<sup>19</sup> Still the convoys of Jews continued to arrive, despite Isopescu's pleas to Governor Alexianu that the populace of the town of Golta itself was in danger of infection. Contact between the Jews and the local Ukrainian inhabitants, who went to Bogdanovka to sell food, the Ukrainian militia and the Romanian gendarmes who guarded the camp, had spread the disease, while at Domanovka the able-bodied Jews were sent out to work the land.

By the middle of December, Isopescu's nightmare had become reality. He estimated the number of Jews in Bogdanovka at 52,000; some were crammed into the forty-odd cowsheds, while others were out in the open, scattered over an area of 3 kilometres on the west bank of the Bug, 35 kilometres south of the town of Golta. Overcrowding, typhus and temperatures of minus 30 degrees centigrade, all contributed to a sudden rise in the death rate; in the cowsheds the living and dead lay alongside each other. According to the gendarmerie commander based in the camp,

sergeant-major Nicolae Melinescu, the death-rate jumped from between 50 and 100 Jews a day, to 500 per day.<sup>20</sup>

An added torment for the Jews was Governor Alexianu's order to Isopescu, issued by telegram at the beginning of November, to 'collect' valuables from the Jews, i.e. the money, gold rings, and jewellery which they had taken with them to trade for their survival. These belongings were to be transferred to the Romanian National Bank. On 19 November, Isopescu reported to Alexianu that some of the Jews:

had items on them of great value in gold and jewels. The guard over them at the state farm is weak owing to a shortage of men . . . I found that even the local [Ukrainian] police who had been summoned to assist with the guard had robbed them and then killed them. All these policemen have been arrested.<sup>21</sup>

Yet according to statements made by survivors at his trial in 1945, Isopescu, in concert with his deputy Aristide Pădure, Melinescu and the *praetor* of Golta, Gheorghe Bobei, grossly abused their positions by keeping many of the valuables collected from the Jews instead of handing them over to the National Bank. Their method of 'collection' was original and based on extortion. As the food shortage in Bogdanovka took its toll of the hapless Jews, so Bobei set up a bakery with the help of a Jewish inmate called Izu Landau. Its capacity for baking bread was 500 loaves a day, for a population which stood at about 48,000 at the end of November. Bobei and Landau offered the bread to deportees at five gold roubles a loaf. This extortion lasted only a few days since most of the Jews did not have such sums and the bakery ran out of flour.<sup>22</sup>

Isopescu's description of the Jews' plight at Bogdanovka and his pleas that no more columns should be sent to his camp prompted Alexianu to take drastic measures. A complete paper trail leading directly to the massacre of Jews in Bogdanovka cannot be established — although this should not surprise us given that similar portentous orders were never communicated in writing by Antonescu nor by Alexianu. The records available relating to events at Bogdanovka indicate that an order from Alexianu was delivered verbally and in person to Isopescu by a special envoy that the Jews in the camp should be shot. Isopescu passed the order down to Pădure, who seeing nothing criminal in it, committed it to paper and sent it on to Vasile Manescu, the *praetor* of Domanevka. The latter, in his turn, passed the order to Nicolae Melinescu, the senior gendarmerie officer at Bogdanovka. At this point, as the indictment against those involved in the massacre relates that:

Melinescu showed a spark of humanity. He knew how to rob the Jews, he knew how to torture them, he knew how to shoot them from time to time, or to beat



them, but the extermination of those 48,000 persons was something he told [Mănescu] that he did not understand and could not carry out. He could not.<sup>23</sup>

In the face of this refusal either Isopescu or Pădure, or perhaps both, decided to use the local Ukrainian police to carry out the mass murders. Seventy police were assembled at Golta and placed under the command of Afanasie Andrushin, a fifty-one year old Ukrainian policeman born in Chişinău. His knowledge of Romanian was fragmentary — he could not read or write the language. Before leaving for Bogdanovka he received, according to Melinescu, a written order dated 13 December from Pădure to shoot all the Jews remaining in Golta, with the exception of a number of ‘specialists’ — these included doctors. This was Pădure’s solution to the problem of typhus. There were no survivors of this operation; the only information about it comes from declarations made during the 1945 trial.<sup>24</sup>

After the Golta Jews had been murdered, Andrushin received a written order, signed by Pădure, to shoot all the Jews in Bogdanovka camp. He presented this order to Mănescu, the official responsible for the camp. Mănescu kept the order and in its stead gave Andrushin a signed piece of paper on which he had copied the original.

Andrushin reached Bogdanovka on the morning of 20 December and told Sergeant-Major Melinescu that he had written orders to shoot all the Jews. Melinescu asked to see the order but Andrushin, who could not read Romanian, was unable to identify it amongst his papers and left them all on Melinescu’s desk. Melinescu found the order, summoned two of his men, showed it to them and, contrary to instructions, kept the piece of paper until 1943 when he showed it to a court martial investigating abuses committed by civilian staff in Golta and by members of the gendarmerie. The paper, signed by Mănescu, was quoted during the 1945 trial:

Gendarmerie post Bogdanovka: Mr Andrushin from Golta will report to you with 70 policemen who will execute the Jews in the ghetto. The gendarmes will not take part. The valuables will be collected by me. Tear up this piece of paper.

Vasile Mănescu, 20 December 1941.<sup>25</sup>

The massacre began on the following morning. According to the prosecutor’s statement at the post-war trial, the intended victims were split into two groups. The first were the sick, elderly and infirm, who were crammed into stables. Hay was scattered on the stable roofs, doused with petrol, and then torched. It was estimated that four to five thousand souls perished in the inferno. The remaining 43,000 Jews were driven in groups to a nearby forest, stripped of their belongings, made to kneel at the edge of a ravine, and shot in the nape of the neck. The murders took place over several days. On the orders of Isopescu the bodies were cremated. Such

was the number of dead that the cremations lasted throughout January and February 1942.<sup>26</sup>

Mănescu was also found guilty at his trial in 1945 of ordering the murder of 18,000 detainees at Domanevka. Many of the Jews were suffering from typhus and again fear of the disease spreading seems to have driven the massacre. Once again the executioners were local Ukrainian policemen, under the command of Mihail Cazachievici, a Ukrainian-born Romanian. The shootings began about 10 January 1942 and continued until 18 March.<sup>27</sup>

Several thousand Jews are estimated to have perished through disease and hunger in the camp at Acmechetka — the numbers range from four to fourteen thousand. The camp served as a giant sickness-centre, in which infirm and sick Jews were concentrated. Isopescu allowed the patients to die of hunger, providing them with only the most meagre of supplies. These were principally made up of corn meal, which the inmates were unable to cook, hence they ate it raw. According to depositions made at his trial, Isopescu often showed up drunk at the camp and took photographs.<sup>28</sup>

The record of bestiality shown by the Romanian authorities at Bogdanovka, Domanevka, and Acmechetka ranks alongside the most horrific acts of mass butchery carried out in the twentieth century. Based on trial records, a figure of about 70,000 Jews has been computed as the number murdered in the three localities between 21 December 1941 and the end of February 1942. This was a solely Romanian affair. The part played by the Germans was largely that of spectators. They may well have put pressure on Alexianu to give the initial orders to Isopescu, fearing as they did a typhus epidemic that would spread across the Bug into their own area of Ukraine, but the evidence suggests that they did not participate directly in these murders.

### *Reversal of the Deportation Policy*

In the summer of 1942, Antonescu reversed his policy on deportation. Not only did he decide against acceding to German requests that the remaining Jewish population of Romania — from the Banat, southern Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldova — be sent to the death camps in Poland, but he also suspended the deportations to Transnistria. A conjunction of considerations persuaded him: first, a growing concern that Germany might lose the war and that therefore he would possibly be called to account for his actions — this was underlined by a call to the Romanian government by the US Secretary of State Cordell Hull in September 1942 for a halt to



the deportations to Transnistria on pain of measures being taken against Romanians living in the United States; and secondly, protests at the German-Romanian plan for the deportations to Poland by Helen, the Queen Mother, the Swiss *charge d'affaires* Rene de Veck, the Apostolic Nuncio Andrea Cassulo, and the Metropolitan of Transylvania, Nicolae Balan which pointed out that deportation, the institution of ghettos, and the wearing of the Star of David had been measures taken only in satellite and occupied countries such as Croatia and Poland, and not in other sovereign Axis members such as Italy and Hungary.<sup>29</sup> At a Council of Ministers meeting held on 13 October 1942, which the Marshal did not attend, Mihai Antonescu announced that 'all despatches of Jews across the Dnestr are suspended for the time being'.<sup>30</sup> Reversals on the eastern front in the winter of 1942 could only convince Antonescu of the wisdom of reconsidering his policy towards the Jews. He therefore decided to remove the Jews from the labour camps to the ghettos where they would be less exposed to the ravages of winter.

By mid-December 1942, with deportation out of the reckoning, Antonescu had come round to the view that emigration was the solution to the Jewish problem in Romania. On 12 December, Manfred von Killinger, the German minister in Bucharest, informed the German foreign ministry that Radu Lecca, head of the Central Jewish Office, had received instructions from the Marshal to organize 'the emigration of 75,000 to 80,000 Jews to Palestine and Syria'. The only condition for emigration was payment by each emigrant of 200,000 lei.<sup>31</sup> German objections were to no avail. Emigration was not an option for the Jews surviving in Transnistria. Return to Romania was expressly forbidden by Governor Alexianu, unless a case for wrongful deportation could be made. Jews there resigned themselves to life in the ghettos and the camps.

### *Flight from the Ghetto*

In late summer 1943, reports from the gendarmerie in Golta point to a growing number of escapes by Jews from the ghettos and camps in that county. Word had reached the Jews of the German defeats at the front. The prospect of falling into the hands of the retreating Germans filled the Jews with terror. Their alarm was compounded by rumours about the fate of their fellows who had been sent across the Bug to work on various German projects.

When the German need for labour became pressing, the authorities in the *Reichkommissariat Ukraine* requested Jewish workers from Trans-

nistria since the Germans executed the Jews under their own jurisdiction once they were considered surplus to requirements. Deals were struck between the *Todt* organization and other German construction agencies with the Transnistrian government for the supply of Jewish labour. In some cases, the prefects were glad of this opportunity to get rid of recalcitrant or infirm Jews, in others happy to hand over the Jews, merely to avoid the problem of feeding them, and on occasions both. The first detachment of such Jews — 3,000 in number — had been despatched in June 1942. The old and children amongst them were immediately shot by units of the SS, made up largely of German colonists from the area. Most of the able-bodied survivors, after performing the labour required, suffered the same fate. It has been estimated that at least 15,000 of the Jews supplied from Transnistria met their death in this way between 1942 and 1944.<sup>32</sup>

One project of the *Todt* organization in Golta county was the construction of a bridge over the Bug to link southern Transnistria with the *Reichkommissariat Ukraine*. The bridge was built between Trihati on the west bank and Oceakov on the east, and its construction undertaken by German companies. Work began in spring 1943 and finished in December. Marshal Antonescu himself approved the despatch of Jews for labour. Four thousand Jews, the majority deportees from Romania, were provided and concentrated in three camps on the Romanian-administered side of the Bug, at Trihati, Varvarovka and Kolosovka. More than 800 Jews from Golta county were handed over to the German authorities to work on the bridge.<sup>33</sup>

On learning of these developments several Jews took their fate into their own hands by taking flight from the ghetto in the town of Golta. Poor security and the proximity of the railway line facilitated their escape. Some of these escapes were made with the connivance of Romanian officials and Jews who worked in the Golta prefect's office and falsified identity cards.<sup>34</sup> A general alert was put out by the Police Directorate in Bucharest on 28 October 1943 for the arrest and deportation back to Transnistria for forty-two Jews who had escaped from the Golta town during the previous month. Replies from regional police headquarters throughout Romania show that none of them was apprehended.

Those taking flight from the labour camp were, in fact, merely jumping the gun. Pressure from two fronts was beginning to have an effect on Romanian policy towards the deported Jews. The first was the eastern front, where Soviet advances reminded the Romanian dictator and his closest associates of the precariousness of their position and a probable reckoning with the Allies. The second was Filderman, who bombarded



Antonescu and General Vasiliu, the head of the gendarmerie, with memoranda demanding the repatriation of *all* [author's italics] Jews from Transnistria. Some progress was made in this respect when on 30 September 1943 the Romanian Council of Order (*Consiliul de Ordine*), a new state body for repatriation, ordered the gendarmerie in Transnistria to repatriate all Jews sentenced for contraventions of the forced labour requirements who had completed their terms of punishment. Upon arrival in their places of origin, the Jews concerned were to report to the local police.

Consideration of the repatriation of other categories of Jews was given by Vasiliu in November, but no firm action was taken. It was not until 8 December that the repatriation of the Jews from Dorohoi and a small group of Jews deported for political reasons was ordered. Between 20–25 December, 6,107 Jews, mostly from Dorohoi, were moved from Transnistria to (Romanian) Moldova. Only on 14 March 1944, with Soviet forces already in Transnistria and retreating German troops venting their anger in murderous fashion on Jews they came upon, did Antonescu agree to allow the return of all Jews from Transnistria.<sup>35</sup>

The experience of Jews in Transnistria is indicative of the manner in which Antonescu's treatment of the Jews differed from that meted out by Hitler. While German and Romanian forces joined in mass executions of Jews in Bessarabia and Bukovina in the summer of 1941, after that date Romanian treatment of the Jews broadly-speaking followed a separate course. If, as in the German case, discrimination was followed by deportation, in the Romanian case deportation did not lead to the gas-chamber. Tens of thousands of Jews from Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transnistria were indeed shot in the period from winter 1941 until early spring 1942 on Romanian orders in Golta county, but subsequently the plight of the Jews in Transnistria was characterized by degradation and callous neglect. Jews residing in Ukraine beyond Transnistria were likely to suffer a quick death by shooting at the hands of the Germans, but in Transnistria Jews often faced a slow death by typhus or starvation. The contrast between German and Romanian actions is illustrated by the fact that the largest proportion of Jews to survive Axis rule during the World War II in the Soviet Union was in Transnistria.

## Notes

- 1 These figures are based on the reports sent to Antonescu by the governors of Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transnistria. They are the numbers of Jews deported and surviving in Transnistria on 15 November 1943. For this information, see the records of the Archive of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs held at the Archive of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (henceforth USHMM), Romanian Ministry of National Defence, RG 25.006m, reel 10, file 21, 133–135; reel 11, file 21, 589. Radu Ioanid estimates a similar death toll in *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime, 1940–1944*, published in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Chicago, 2000, p. 174.
- 2 Jewish victims of the Holocaust in Hungary numbered 564,000. 63,000 were murdered before German occupation. The 501,000 murdered afterwards included 132,000 Jews from Hungarian-annexed northern Transylvania. See, Randolph L. Braham, 'Northern Transylvania', in *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, Vol. 4, New York and London, 1990, pp. 1476–78.
- 3 See footnote 1.
- 4 Jean Ancel, *Transnistria*, Bucharest, 3 vols, Vol. 1, 1998, p. 126.
- 5 'Minutes of the meeting of the Council of Ministers, 8 July 1941,' in Lya Benjamin (ed.), *Evreii din România între anii 1940–1944*. Vol. 2, *Problema evreiască în stenogramele Consiliului de Miniștri*, Bucharest, 1996, p. 266.
- 6 Jean Ancel (ed.), *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry During the Holocaust*, (hereafter, DCFRJH), New York, 1986, Vol. 3, pp. 259–62.
- 7 See, USHMM, RG 25.003, reel 116, file 941.
- 8 For the German reaction to the expulsions of Jews by the Romanian authorities, see Andrej Angrick, 'The Escalation of German-Rumanian Anti-Jewish Policy after the Attack on the Soviet Union', *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol. 26, 1998, pp. 203–8.
- 9 Alexander Dallin, *Odessa, 1941–1944: A Case Study of Soviet Territory under Foreign Rule*, Iași, Oxford, Portland, 1998, pp. 198–206. This study was originally prepared as a RAND Corporation Report (RM-1875): Alexander Dallin, 'Odessa, 1941–1944: A Case Study of Soviet Territory under Foreign Rule,' *RAND*, Santa Monica, CA, 1957.
- 10 'Minutes of the meeting of the Council of Ministers, 6 September 1941', in Benjamin (ed.), *Evreii din România între anii 1940–1944*. Vol. 2, *Problema evreiască în stenogramele Consiliului de Miniștri*, p. 303.
- 11 On 9 December 1941, General Constantin Vasiliu, then Inspector-General of Gendarmes, reported to Marshal Antonescu that the evacuation of Jews from these two provinces had been completed, and that 108,002 persons had been resettled in Transnistria. This was the figure mentioned in the trial of Antonescu in May 1946. General Vasiliu declared on 12 November 1943 that the number of Jews deported to Transnistria was 110,033, of whom 10,368 were from Dorohoi (northern Moldova), 55,867 from Bessarabia, and 43,793 from northern Bukovina: Matatias Carp, *Cartea Neagra*, Vol. 3, Bucharest, 1996, p. 447. The information bulletin of the Inspectorate of Gendarmes in Transnistria (15 December 1941–12 January 1942) states that up to that date



- 118,847 Jews had been deported to Transnistria through the following transit points: Iampol, 35,276; Moghilev, 55,913; Tiraspol, 872; Râbnița, 24,570; and Iaska, 2,216: Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania*, p.149. This contrasts with the figures submitted by the governors of Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transnistria to Mihai Antonescu in November 1943 which stated that 90,334 Jews had been deported from Bukovina and 56,089 from Bessarabia, a total of 146,423: Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania*, p. 174.
- 12 Its official name was *Comisiunea de Ajutorare de pe lângă Secțiunea de Asistență a Centralei Evreilor din România* (The Aid Committee attached to the Aid Section of the Central Jewish Office).
  - 13 USHMM, Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, RG. 25.006M, reel 10, Vol. 21, p. 245.
  - 14 Amongst the recommendations in a report by two delegates of the Central Jewish Office, dated 22 December 1943, compiled on completion of an inspection of conditions in several Transnistrian ghettos, was 'the replacement of ghetto heads who, through perversity or weakness, carry out a veritable embezzlement of clothing, medicines or monies which are sent': Ancel, DCFRJJH, Vol. 5, p. 535.
  - 15 Șaraga's report can be found in USHMM, Archive of the Romanian Security Service, RG. 25.004M, reel no. 9, file 2710/33, pp. 106–63.
  - 16 Ancel, *Transnistria*, Vol. 1, pp. 155–6.
  - 17 Dallin, *Odessa, 1941–1944*, p. 74. On 22 May 1945, twenty-nine war criminals, including Generals Nicolae Macici, Constantin Trestioreanu and Cornel Calotescu, were sentenced to death, and a further eight to various terms of imprisonment. Macici, Trestioreanu and Calotescu were charged with carrying out reprisals against the Jewish population of Odessa in October 1941. At his trial Macici denied that he was the person responsible for carrying out Antonescu's order, pointing to the fact that even the prosecution had recognized that he only arrived in Odessa on the morning of 23 October 1941. In answer to the charge that he had done nothing to stop the massacres, Macici replied that General Ion Iacobici, his superior as commander of the Romanian Fourth Army, was aware of what was happening in the city and had issued no orders to stop the reprisals. It was General Trestioreanu, Macici stated, who reported to Antonescu that he had carried out the order to take reprisals: *Cotidianul. Arhiva*, Vol. 5, no. 3, 22 March 1996, p. 3. The death sentences were commuted to life imprisonment on 5 June: *Universul*, 6 June 1945. Macici died in Aiud prison on 15 June 1950 of heart failure: *Cotidianul. Arhiva*, Vol. 5, no. 3, 22 March 1996, p. 7.
  - 18 Ancel, *Transnistria*, Vol. 1, p. 174.
  - 19 Jean Ancel, 'Antonescu and the Jews', *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol. 23, 1993, p. 258.
  - 20 Ancel, *Transnistria*, Vol. 1, p. 169.
  - 21 Ibid., p. 171.
  - 22 Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania*, p. 183.
  - 23 Ancel, *Transnistria*, Vol. 1, pp. 181–2.
  - 24 USHMM, RG.25.004M, reels 19, 20, file 40011, Vol. 6.
  - 25 Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania*, p. 184.

- 26 A detailed description of the massacre, taken from survivors' statements presented at the post-war trial, can be found in *ibid.*, pp. 183–4 and Ancel, *Transnistria*, Vol. 1, p. 185–90.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 208.
- 28 Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania*, pp. 185–6.
- 29 Jean Ancel, 'Plans for the Deportation of the Rumanian Jews and their Discontinuation in Light of Documentary Evidence (July-October 1942)', *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol. 16, 1984, pp. 388–9.
- 30 Lya Benjamin (ed.), *Evreii din România între anii 1940–1944*. Vol. 2, *Problema evreiască în stenogramele Consiliului de Miniștri*, p. 458. The word 'deportation' was avoided.
- 31 Andreas Hillgruber, *Hitler, König Carol und Marschall Antonescu. Die deutsch-rumänischen Beziehungen, 1938–1944*, Wiesbaden, 1965, p. 241.
- 32 Ancel, *Transnistria*, Vol. 2, p. 226.
- 33 *Ibid.*, pp. 229–30.
- 34 General Constantin Tobescu, the head of the General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie, informed Isopescu on 19 September 1943 that 'to date fifteen Jews have escaped from the camps and ghettos in Golta, all of them with the incorrect assistance of Romanian officials'. In one case cited, a Jewish employee of the prefecture falsified an identity card. Tobescu ordered Isopescu to let him know what measures he intended to take. An irritated Isopescu wrote over the top of Tobescu's letter: 'All kikes to be moved to Acmecetka on 25 October' : USHMM, Nikolaev. RG. 31.008. Microfiche, 2178/1/57. A report from a representative to the Aid Committee dated October 1943, on which the signature is illegible, mentions that Isopescu had told him that he had already given the order for the first transport of Jews to Acmecetka to proceed. Whether other transports followed is not clear: Ancel, *DCFRJH*, Vol. 5, p. 501.
- 35 Antonescu's indecision over repatriation is charted by Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania*, pp. 249–58.





## The Moldovan Economy: From 'Model' to 'Crash'?

Ronald J. Hill<sup>1</sup>

The performance of the economy of the Republic of Moldova has been fraught with difficulties and successes. At the time of writing, there is no clear indication of long-term prosperity, and difficult years lie ahead. There can be no doubt that the politics and economy of independent Moldova are closely intertwined — possibly more so than in other countries undergoing the transition from communism. At stake is the republic's very existence as a separate state, quite apart from the more specific question of whether or not economic conditions can be created that will foster and support democratic institutions.

### *The Inheritance*

The Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) was the second smallest of the Soviet republics after Armenia, and one of the poorest in terms of natural endowment, apart from its rich black soil. It suffers from extreme aridity in the south, depends heavily on irrigation from the Dnestr in the north and east, relies on transit through the territory of other states (Romania and Ukraine) for its imports and exports (but it has a frontage on the Danube, which, although less than a kilometre in length, could give access to the Black Sea), and is almost entirely dependent on externally-sourced energy and other raw material inputs into its economy. It has a rapidly rising population, which became significantly urbanized in the period of Soviet rule from 1944 until 1989: the capital city, Chişinău (better known in its Russian variant, Kishinev), expanded from 216,000 in 1959 to 356,000 in 1970 and more than 750,000 thirty years later, acquiring the attributes of a republican capital: the presence of universities and an Academy of Sciences, a television and radio centre, government buildings, hospitals, hotels, museums, theatres and concert halls, and the republic's



only international airport (which, however, only acquired its international status with the collapse of the Soviet Union). Other cities, such as Tiraspol, the largest city to the east of the Dnestr and Bălți (Beltsy) in the north, also gained the characteristics of regional centres, with administrative, educational, cultural and trading establishments, plus industrial enterprises that steadily attracted the population from the rural hinterland. With the Soviet government's policy of industrialization and integration, tractor-assembly, washing machine and refrigerator manufacturing and similar light- and medium- engineering and manufacturing were set up in the capital, along with clothing and textile production and much food-processing in Tiraspol. The traditional wine production and cognac distillation were expanded and placed on an industrial footing, and in the south the cultivation of tobacco, sunflowers, maize and other 'industrial' crops was encouraged. Under the long-serving Communist Party First Secretary Ivan Ivanovich Bodiul, honey and walnut production was also promoted, and the republic was the scene of a number of experiments in economic management: the 'link system' was established on collective farms in the mid-1960s (whereby teams of workers were given responsibility for cultivating particular pieces of land in quasi-family units), and in the following decade the ministry of agriculture was abolished and replaced by local management. On the Dnestr a major hydroelectric scheme was built at Dubossary (Dubăsari), and in Tiraspol, (on the Ukrainian or left-bank side of the river), defence-related heavy industry was developed, along with a military airfield for use by a sizeable Soviet army contingent (a second air base was built in the north near to Bălți). When I lived in Chișinău and Tiraspol thirty-odd years ago, those cities were both expanding rapidly. Tiraspol was introducing its first trolley-bus routes, new estates, factories and other 'modern' facilities were being built and permanently changing the traditional character of these and other towns and cities in the Soviet republic.

Nevertheless, Moldova remained one of the least advanced former-Soviet republics when it gained independence in 1991. Some 54 per cent of the population were rural dwellers and agriculture still accounted for 40 per cent or more of the net material output and agriculture-based activities (including food-processing, wine-making, tobacco-curing and so on) made up a similar proportion of industrial output. Moldova — and specifically the 'Bessarabian' part (i.e. the lands between the rivers Prut and Dnestr) — had, indeed, been treated as essentially part of the Soviet Union's food-producing periphery; and, following re-adoption of the Russian imperial strategy of development, most of the heavy industry and much of the processing industry was located in what is now referred to as

Transnistria. Practically, all the republic's energy was (and is) imported from Russia; virtually all production was geared for consumption within the USSR. Only 5 per cent or so of exports from the republic left the USSR in 1989.

### *Effects of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*

The break-up of the Soviet Union led directly to severe interference in the trade links with other former Soviet republics, with the institution of new trade barriers in the form of customs and other imposts, new bureaucratic formalities, the disintegration of the rail, road and air networks, and the partial breakdown of law and order in newly independent territories on which Moldova depended. The establishment of new links with Romania (including the building of new bridges over the River Prut) has facilitated Western-oriented trade, but Moldova has suffered greatly from the fragmentation and economic collapse of its former markets (hardly markets in the sense that this word is understood in the capitalist system: materials and products were allocated and markets did not have to be 'conquered' inside the command economy, so that sales of products were guaranteed). The heavy dependence on Russia for energy, in particular, and its supply through pipelines that cross Ukraine and Transnistria, has left the new regime very vulnerable and open to economic blackmail.

As a supplier, Moldova's contribution to the economy of the former Soviet Union was modest (although Moldova supplied specific agricultural products, notably tobacco, wine and cognac, these were largely non-essential products), and the Moldovan economic collapse was a peripheral element in the total picture. From the opposite perspective, however, the almost complete collapse of its suppliers and of its market had a catastrophic impact on the economy of Moldova. Almost two-thirds of the aggregate social output of the republic was accounted for by imports from and exports to other parts of the Soviet Union — possibly the highest ratio of all the Soviet republics. The disruption of trade on this scale was devastating. By 1997, the republic's GDP stood at only 35 per cent of its level in 1989, beginning with a fall of 18 per cent in 1991, the year in which Moldova gained independence and the Soviet Union was replaced by the Commonwealth of Independent States. Changes in government from conservative to centre-left socialist followed by a war in Bender (in Romanian, Tighina, a right-bank city opposite Tiraspol), presidential elections and a change in government, plus a sharp rise in Russia's charges for energy (from 16 to 43 per cent of all import costs), led to a further



decrease of 21 per cent in 1992. Then, following a year of relative stabilization in 1993 (the year in which Moldova finally joined the CIS economic union), the year 1994 witnessed a further decline of 30 per cent in GDP, which continued in subsequent years.

For most of the population, this has been disastrous. Poverty is everywhere to be seen, especially in rural areas and in the public amenities. Roads, pavements, parks, and public buildings throughout the republic are in need of repair and restoration work. The public transport system, particularly buses, is in poor repair and travel safety must be a concern. Wages and pensions, as elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, go unpaid for months. Moreover, the transition to a market economy and democracy has been accompanied, as in other transition states, by rising unemployment, inflation and the rapid expansion of the unofficial economy, and the whole situation has been exacerbated by the unresolved politics of the separation of the Dnestr Moldovan Republic.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, in the early years of independence, Moldova was well regarded by outside commentators for the effectiveness of its economic performance.

### *Moldova as Model — and its Decline*

Moldova moved swiftly in the direction of privatization and the market economy. The first privatization law was adopted in July 1991 (that is, before Moldova gained independence). In several phases of voucher privatization, citizens were given vouchers in quantities related to the number of years they had worked in the state, and these were used in auctions to buy housing or shares in commercial companies. The auctions began with small enterprises in 1992 and continued in subsequent years, so that by the end of 1994, 80 per cent of the housing stock and approaching 2,000 enterprises (more than a third of state assets) had been privatized. Moreover, after the rampant inflation that accompanied continued use of the rouble, Moldova introduced its own currency — the leu — in November 1993, and succeeded in maintaining a low level of inflation that retained the dollar value of the currency far more effectively than most of the transition economies. Inflation, which had reached 2,000 per cent in 1992, was down to 104.6 per cent in 1994, 23.8 per cent in 1995, 15.1 per cent in 1996 and 11.2 per cent in 1997. The currency has remained fully convertible, and, from a rate of 3.666 to the US dollar in January 1994 (a slight hardening over the previous month, the first full month of the currency's existence), it declined only very steadily, with some fluctuations, over the next four and a half years, and stood at an annual average

of 4.60 through 1996 and 1997. Results such as these led *The Economist* in March 1995, in a phrase that has been much quoted in official Moldovan commentary and government economic prospectuses, to identify Moldova as 'the model of right reformism — it has firmly intended to take the road of revival after the economic crisis . . . a government which possesses the reputation of reformer, as well as compact territory (which makes the country a perfect laboratory for reforms), all this deserves positive appraisal and support'.<sup>3</sup>

It has proved impossible to sustain the optimism of early 1995, however. The following year was a year of unbalanced financial stability. An unsuccessful attempt was made to stimulate renewed growth in output, and the economy and its management became issues in the presidential election campaign. By early 1997, at least 40 per cent of enterprises were standing idle, operating at a loss, or both. A spurt in output in early 1996 was outweighed by a recession in the second half of the year, leading to a decline of 8.5 per cent for the year as a whole. Lack of an adequate capital base meant that necessary renewal projects could not be undertaken. And there was a knock-on deterioration in the quality of life, measured by health and safety, deterioration in education, healthcare and cultural provision, and a rise in crime.

The following year, 1997, showed that the optimism of just two years earlier was misplaced. In its report entitled, *Republic of Moldova: Strategy for Development*, dated 1998 (and produced in April of that year), the Center for Strategic Studies and Reform stated bluntly that: 'as became clear later, these assessments were exaggerated'. And, although the government had achieved an impressive level of macro-economic stability, the investment needed for restructuring and re-equipping industrial plant in preparation for renewed growth simply was not forthcoming. It was not available in either the state budget or private hands, and foreign investment was withheld for a variety of reasons, some of them relating to the problems over Transnistria (see below).

Certainly, in the first seven years of Moldovan independence, more than 400 new laws and statutes were enacted, the private sector expanded to 50 per cent of the GEP; the currency was relatively stable; inflation was controlled and stood at a monthly average of 0.85 per cent in 1997; banks, stock exchange and other institutions appropriate for a market economy were set up and the service sector increased its share of GDP to about 30 per cent — a sign of a modernizing economy. But production remained obstinately stagnant, and there were indications that the shadow economy was absorbing more and more economic activity — 40 per cent in 1997, and estimates (or guesses) rising to 60 or 70 per cent by mid-1998, and a



belief that criminal elements were becoming involved. By that time it was being argued that the inability of the state to collect taxes and excise and customs duties — to some extent because of corruption on the part of those charged with levying them — had exacerbated the fiscal problems that prevented the government from meeting its commitments to pensioners, to its own salaried employees, and to the public who depended on state-run education and health-care facilities. Emergency measures introduced by the president in January 1997 helped to alleviate the situation, but it was clear that the state would need to take steps to support entrepreneurship, attract foreign investment, promote exports and introduce social reforms which treated ‘the socio-economic organism as a whole rather than [offering] ad hoc solutions’. Accordingly, a more comprehensive approach was advanced, based on the concept of a ‘strategy for development’ of Moldova as a ‘small open economy’, and beginning with an elaboration of the concept of national interests:

The national interest of the Republic of Moldova today can be identified as: the affirmation of its statehood, preservation of territorial integrity, creation of [a] united and viable economic ensemble with a market economy, where the welfare, physical and spiritual development of the people resides on personal results, and the determination in the nearest future of a well-deserved place for Moldova in the European and world context.<sup>4</sup>

This thinking represented a clear orientation of Moldova towards the West, aiming at eventual membership of the European Union, a task that seems unlikely to be attained in less than 15 years (one study allowed for 20–30 years),<sup>5</sup> and on pessimistic scenarios would take substantially longer, and might never be reached without positive assistance on the part of the European Union itself. Yet the government of Ion Sturza, formed in March 1999, formally announced entry to the EU as part of its strategic goal — indeed, as its top foreign-policy priority. After the statement of that goal, in conjunction with other economic stabilization measures, the IMF, the World Bank and other international agencies resumed contacts, and the promises of loans to Moldova, which had been suspended in 1998.

### *The International Dimension*

Relations with the rest of the world are obviously crucial for the development of Moldova. It lies at the meeting-point of several historic empires: the Russian, the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman, and accordingly of the Orthodox Christian, Roman Catholic and Islamic religions.

Its population, while dominated by 'Moldovans' (culturally Romanian), has a significant admixture of Ukrainians, Russians, Bulgarians, Jews and Poles, Greeks and members of other nationalities, including the Christianized Turks of the south, the Gagauz, who negotiated a measure of autonomy at the time of independence. In early 1999, a Bulgarian-populated county held a referendum on its local administration, wishing to retain its cultural identity. The Romanian nation and state have not totally abandoned their irredentist claims on Moldova, and the prospect of Romanian membership of the European Union in a future wave of enlargement undoubtedly affects thinking in Chişinău. The problem of *identity* of the Moldovan nation and state is clearly a factor that deters foreign direct investment. On the one hand there is a residual belief that the republic — or at least the 'Bessarabian' part of it (between the rivers Prut and Dnestr) — will eventually be absorbed by Romania. On the other — and of greater immediate concern — there is the secession of 'Transnistria'. This is not only a political problem that has already (in the summer of 1992) led to a brief war in which several hundred were killed. It also involves other powers in the region, notably Ukraine and Russia, the second of which tacitly — and in some quarters openly — supports the breakaway region and its regime, and maintains an army garrison in Transnistria in breach of the constitution of the Republic of Moldova which it otherwise officially acknowledges as valid. This dispute, which has continued for the best part of the 1990s and seems likely to endure for some time longer, has a deleterious effect on the economy of Moldova as a whole.

### *The Problem of 'Transnistria'*

Part of the difficulty lies in the fact that, for political and constitutional reasons, the authorities in Chişinău cannot acknowledge the existence of 'Transnistria' as a separate economy operating independently, whereas the authorities in Tiraspol have no such inhibitions: that is, of course, the point of their claim to statehood. The lack of control over the eastern region deprives the economy of Moldova of up to 40 per cent of its industrial capacity, including the bulk of the heavy industry (including its only iron and steel plant and its largest cement-production plant) and the republic's main power-generation capacity, plus textiles, clothing and footwear factories that might in principle be capable of contributing to the country's exports, or at least supplying a market that has to a considerable extent been filled by imports.



The isolation of Transnistria has a number of additional negative effects which are understood in Chişinău, and which were analysed in a discussion paper prepared by World Bank officials in Moldova in early 1998.<sup>6</sup> Apart from the loss of the major industrial plants, particularly engineering and heavy industry, depriving the republic of both the production (and potential profits) and taxation revenues that this implies, the separation of Transnistria also deprives the republic of substantial agricultural output (from a region that has developed irrigation to a high level, which is not true of the arid southern part of the republic), and of a population of some 670,000, or 16 per cent of the population of Moldova as a whole. Again, the loss of tax revenue from such a population is significant. In short, this was a substantial economic area, which is reckoned to have accounted for more than a quarter of the former Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic's GDP. Moreover, Transnistria's location is strategically important for the economy of the Bessarabian majority territory: it lies between Bessarabia and the key Ukrainian Black Sea port of Odessa; the main rail link with Ukraine and Russia passes through Tiraspol; road bridges across the Dnestr destroyed in the early 1990s, are vital to the republic's exports to the east and north-east (Ukraine and Russia in particular); oil and gas pipelines from Ukraine and Russia into Moldova likewise cross the narrow territory of the Transnistrian republic, and electricity generated in the left-bank region supplies the needs of the main territory. Hence, to the extent that the easterly orientation of Moldova's trade remains, Transnistria occupies a vital position, which gives the authorities in Tiraspol a powerful lever that can be (and was, in 1992) used to exert pressure on Chişinău. In July 1999, Transnistria plunged Chişinău into a three-day blackout by cutting power from the Cuciurgan electrical power plant in a dispute over claims for payments.

Internally, the small market has been fragmented, and barriers to trade between the two territories, including complex and time-consuming customs regulations, were quickly put in place, disrupting trading patterns and having an inhibiting effect on both sides of the Dnestr. Lack of investment in plant upkeep has forced both Moldova and Transnistria to rely more heavily than before on imported energy, and enormous unpaid debts to Russia (notably to Gazprom) have become a serious political issue between Russia and its trading partner. By February 1997, energy debt-arrears to Russia had reached \$400 million, and a further \$217 million were owed to Ukraine. Moreover, the Transnistrian authorities have adopted a profligate attitude towards energy use, and run up debts as great as those for the rest of Moldova. In effect, whereas I was told by the minister of the economy of Transnistria in May 1998 that personal

taxation was lower than in the Republic of Moldova, the Tiraspol authorities have been exploiting Gazprom's indulgence in order to subsidize their citizens, possibly on an unspoken assumption that, if and when a constitutional settlement is reached, Chişinău will pick up the bill. (It should also be noted that arrears in payments to state workers and pensioners are at least as bad in Transnistria as elsewhere. One family in three in Transnistria was owed salary payments by the state in 1997.) How far this is tolerated by Gazprom and the Russian state authorities for political reasons is open to conjecture. What is certain is that nationalist (including communist) circles in Russia have been among the staunch supporters of Transnistria's independence, with periodic visits to the territory by nationalist Russian politicians. Moreover, both the Republic of Moldova and the Transnistrian republic presented sixty-fifth birthday awards to the head of Gazprom, Ren Viakhirev, for his contribution to the solution to their respective energy problems.<sup>7</sup>

The isolation of the eastern territory and the hostile political relationship between the two regions has further pernicious economic effects, in addition to the loss of the contribution to the national economy that Transnistria would otherwise be making, and the restriction of the domestic market caused by customs tariffs imposed at the Dnestr. By its refusal to treat Transnistria as a separate state, and consequently not recognising the Dnestr as an inter-state border, in effect Chişinău has no real control over its eastern frontier. Consequently, the boundary with Ukraine — and the port city of Odessa is but 150 kilometres away — is virtually an open border. This means that opportunities exist for smuggling, tax evasion and what is reckoned to be a vast amount of unrecorded foreign trade, principally imports, mainly of tobacco products and alcoholic beverages, lubricants and fuel. In addition, it is clear that criminal elements — petty and organized — exploit the situation. One report from Chişinău, of an interview between the news agency *Infotag* and the republic's minister of the interior, Victor Catan, on 27 January 1999, claimed that smuggling through and from Transnistria, involving identified legitimate firms in Tiraspol as well as criminal elements, had inflicted damage amounting to some 800 million lei in 1998 alone. In addition, weaponry regularly crossed the boundary, it was claimed, adding to the problem of criminality inside Moldova.

Unrecorded — and therefore unregulated and untaxed — goods appear to flood into the country from Turkey or Bulgaria via Odessa and Transnistria, where customs officers are not immune from the temptations of bribery. The large open-air markets in Chişinău, carrying a vast range of products, from padlocks and toilet bowls to wedding dresses and men's



suits, plus counterfeit CD-ROMs of pre-release computer programmes issued by Microsoft and other Western companies, bear witness to the scale of this operation. The authorities in Chişinău may tolerate it as a safety-valve, without which social and political unrest might arise. Nevertheless, it has a negative impact on the capacity of the state to exert its authority, and it contributes to a culture of non-compliance.

Perhaps even more significant at this stage of the country's transition to the market as a 'small, open economy', however, is the effect on foreign, direct investment. Caught between the threat of absorption by Romania, on the one hand, and a secessionist territory on the other, Moldova has been largely shunned as a location for investment or as a trading partner. The attempt to identify an 'image' for projection to the world market, and to find niche products to serve that market, is proving extraordinarily difficult. Consequently, imports have steadily outpaced exports, so that the foreign-trade deficit rose from US\$54 million in 1994 and 55 million in the following year to 234 million in 1996, 384 million in 1997 and 390 million in 1998. (The nominal GDP, against which these figures should be measured, was as follows: 1994 US\$1,164 million; 1995 1,443 million; 1996 1,665 million; 1997 1,933 million; 1998 1,630 million.) Clearly, such a development is not sustainable, and Moody's, the New York-based business assessment firm, reported on 31 August 1999 that the country was close to defaulting on its foreign debt.<sup>8</sup> A settlement of the Dnestr dispute and consequent re-integration of the resources of Transnistria would undoubtedly enhance the prospects of developing a positive approach to international marketing of Moldova, as a source of agriculture-based and manufactured products, and as a location for profitable investment, particularly in projecting itself to the West, where, at the time of writing, opinion increasingly sees the country's future to lie. The need for this was demonstrated by the catastrophic effect of the financial and economic crisis in Russia in August 1998.

### *The Russian Crisis of August 1998 and its Repercussions*

As noted above, Moldova was one of the most heavily integrated republics of the former Soviet Union, dependent almost entirely on other republics for inputs and for markets. The disruption of those economic ties and the imposition of bureaucratic and fiscal controls on inter-republic trade have left the country extremely exposed. The collapse of the Russian rouble has drawn the Moldovan leu in its wake. After several years of stability at about 4.5 lei to the dollar, by the end of 1998 it had fallen to 8.32 and

was projected to fall to 11.58 by the end of 1999, according to the Center for Strategic Research and Reform.<sup>9</sup> In practice, as the authors of the 1999 economic survey put it:

The events of 1998 dissipated the illusions in the country. Both the government and the population understood that . . . monetary policy alone could not ensure a sound macroeconomic stability, while basic institutional and structural reforms were procrastinated, inconsistent, and sometimes even reversed.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, performance figures for the end of 1998 were appalling. Industrial output stood at only about 60 per cent of its level in the early 1990s. Some two-thirds of enterprises were operating to only 10–20 per cent of their capacity. Gross agricultural output was down by figures in the range of 16 per cent (sugar beet) to 73 per cent (fruit and berries), with staples such as cereals and maize down by 29 per cent and 47 per cent respectively. Yields were down, tilled acreage was down, less than a quarter of the needed fertilizer was applied, the harvest campaign was delayed. Only vegetables, sunflowers and potatoes escaped this severe decline. As a result, the processing plants likewise were under-employed — down to a third or so of their capacity, and some even suspended their employees and ceased operation. In total, agricultural production stood at only 85 per cent of its 1997 level, and the insolvency of the principal markets (Russia, Ukraine and Romania) led to huge losses to the state coffers. While privatization of land continued through the year — the number of landowners rose by 66,000 to almost 241,000 — the phase of consolidation, modernization and re-equipping is still to come, and there is a severe lack of capital for investment. The accumulated debts of agricultural enterprises amount to over 2 billion lei, and two-thirds of enterprises have debts greater than their sales, in some cases surpassing ten times their annual turnover. It is quite pitiful seeing former *sovkhos* buildings steadily falling into disrepair, while whole families tend the ‘privatized’ fields with manual implements. This is clearly a serious situation, but in present circumstances it cannot be solved by subsidies or special loans, and barter cannot be a long-term solution. An effective agro-bank and foreign investment are both needed.

Across the economy, the position is extremely serious. No other former Soviet republic has suffered such a steep decline in economic performance as Moldova, and the per capita income, at US\$454 in 1998 (and projected to fall to \$311 in 1999, although the prime minister gave a figure of \$500 in mid 1999) places the country below Albania as the poorest country in Europe.<sup>11</sup> Some 80 per cent of the population have an income of less than US\$2 a day, and the discrepancy between the wealthiest and the poorest



10 per cent was of a magnitude of 15.4 times (more than twice the sevenfold differential of 1993). The social, and perhaps, political, repercussions of these negative developments are potentially very serious indeed. As the April 1999 economic survey comments, in 1998, 'the economic security of the Republic of Moldova was at stake', a view that was echoed by Prime Minister Sturza, who stated on 30 June 1999 that 'the country's economic security was in danger and speedy, far-reaching reforms are the only solution to that situation'.<sup>12</sup>

### *Prospects*

Extricating itself from this situation is clearly going to be extremely difficult. As the position worsens, the temptation to cut corners and not comply with the law grows, exacerbating the situation that begins with the incapacity of the state to perform its necessary regulatory functions. This is compounded by the inability or unwillingness of politicians to adopt the legal measures necessary for advancing the pace of reform. There is a fear that a vicious circle will become embedded in society: corruption on the part of state officials, partly associated with organized crime, leads to economic decline as reforms are watered down and compliance is not exacted. The economic failure then leads to an insufficiency of state revenues, so that the state is unable to budget for the salaries of its officials, let alone any enhancement in their financial position, and they turn to corruption as the only means of survival.

For these and other reasons, international lending agencies such as the World Bank and the IMF are insisting on continuing progress with reform as the price of further financial assistance, notably the privatization of state assets. After a period of suspension of activity in Moldova, the World Bank agreed in early 1999 to provide loans to the tune of US\$183 million over the period mid-1999 to June 2001. This is to support the attainment of macro-economic sustainability, private-sector development and reform of the public sector. However, payment of the full loan was to depend on the government maintaining the pace of reforms, otherwise the loan would be drastically reduced. The performance has not been encouraging.

A key element in economic development must be escaping the excessive reliance on Russia, and that obviously has an implication for the country's political independence as well. Between 1992 and 1998, the proportion of Moldova's exports taken by Russia rose from 40 per cent to 61 per cent; and 80 per cent of energy resources (100 per cent of natural gas) comes from just two sources, Russia and Ukraine. Hence the

profound impact of Russia's financial crisis. But reduction of the level of dependency on Russia depends on two factors: first, raising the quality of production, packaging and marketing to world standards (even in the well-known Moldovan wine industry, production is not effectively marketed and it is believed that some bulk production is exported to Bulgaria, where it is re-bottled and sold in Western Europe as Bulgarian wine), but that requires significant investment in plant and in training; and secondly, sourcing alternative supplies of basics such as energy, in which the country is extremely dependent. It is not without significance that, in addition to promoting Moldova's cause in the European Union, presidential and governmental visits to the Baltic states, Kazakhstan and elsewhere (including Russia) during the summer of 1999 aimed at re-establishing trade links shattered by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the break-up of the rouble zone. Over the longer term, an opening to the world via the River Danube offers possibilities: a border treaty between Moldova and Ukraine, signed on 18 August 1999, gave Ukraine control over a section of road running through Moldova, surrendering in return a 100-metre strip of land along the Danube, which presents an opening to the Black Sea. The projected establishment of an international port on the Danube at Giurgiulești, in a joint venture with Romania and Ukraine, is an obvious means of escaping the constraints of the country's land-locked position. But that would take Moldova well into the twenty-first century, and would in all probability depend on wider international collaboration, perhaps involving the European Union.

Equally important, and more pressingly urgent, is the need to identify, target and penetrate alternative markets and products in which Moldova enjoys natural advantages. Obviously, the country has been isolated throughout its history until the 1990s. Its contacts with the outside world are few, its understanding of how the rest of the world's markets function limited. Here, Western inputs of capital and, perhaps above all, expertise may be crucial. Australian-Moldovan joint ventures in the wine industry have had some success in creating wines acceptable to the Western palate; the tobacco-growing farms of the southern districts have attracted some attention from Western firms. But a strategy of promoting the image of a 'small, open economy' needs to contain many elements designed to attract foreign interest. 'Moldova' is largely unknown, and the negative features of the propinquity of Romania and the Transnistrian problem quickly impinge. Quite simply, there is no positive image for exploitation, and the marketing of Moldovan wine under the 'Kirkwood' brand name fails to establish a strong image of something specifically 'Moldovan'. For the moment, the republic can produce apple and tomato juice in bulk for



export, but it enjoys no particular identity as a 'Moldovan' product. It may well be necessary to go all out to attract and employ external marketing and brand-imaging expertise in order to penetrate the European and other non-CIS markets, and to adopt favourable tax regimes for export-orientated investors.

Clearly, the country cannot live forever on loans from international banking and credit organizations; neither can it live forever with a steadily deteriorating balance of payments. The Center for Strategic Studies and Reform regularly prepares optimistic and pessimistic scenarios. In its April 1999 survey, the optimistic scenario had a GDP decline of 8.6 per cent in 1998 followed by a further decline of 2.5 per cent in 1999, followed by growth in the following years to 2002, while accompanied by further erosion of the value of the currency to the level of 14.5 to the dollar. The pessimistic scenario posits a decline of 5 per cent in 1999 and a further decline of 1.5 per cent in the following year, followed by slow recovery, and accompanied by a rapid fall in the value of the leu to 100 to the dollar by the end of 2002. By the end of October 1999, the leu had fallen below 11 to the US dollar, and it was reported that commercial banks in Chişinău had no dollars available for sale; the government was budgeting for a rate of 12.3 lei to the dollar in the year 2000.<sup>13</sup> There were other signs of deterioration during 1999. In the first nine months of the year, external trade turnover stood at only \$704.9 million, less than half compared with the same period in 1998. Exports stood at \$314.4 million and imports at \$390.5 million.<sup>14</sup>

The outlook is hardly encouraging for ordinary people, for whom everyday life has become extremely hard, and various manifestations of social dislocation are already evident. Crime was up by 11.4 per cent in early 1999 after a decline during 1998; the birth-rate has fallen; emigration has risen; life expectancy has declined from 68.1 years in 1959 to 65.8 years in 1995 (5–10 years lower than in much of Europe); and, as elsewhere, women have been hit particularly severely by unemployment and by the general hardship of everyday living.

Furthermore, constitutional questions over presidential rule following an inconclusive referendum held in May 1999, combined with failure to pass privatization legislation because of blocking tactics by the communist party in this and other matters, raised the continuing threat of political instability. The sacking of the deputy chairman of parliament on 9 July, followed in rapid succession by the resignation of the prosecutor-general and demands for the resignation of the parliamentary chairman were all part of a crisis in which president and parliament were locking horns over the president's constitutional ambitions.<sup>15</sup> These and other factors led to

the suspension or postponement of an expected \$35 million loan from the International Monetary Fund in late October 1999.<sup>16</sup>

Quite apart from political stability, what is required is a complete change in the economic culture, from one in which the state takes the initiative in determining all aspects of economic development, to one in which individuals and organizations, state and private, at all levels, examine their advantages and opportunities, and study the local and international market with a view to identifying niches that Moldova is particularly suited to filling. Switching to high-value crops such as soya, for which there is a clear export market, is one current example.

Despite the gloom, however, some optimism was expressed following the formation of a new government in March 1999 (in somewhat controversial circumstances as the government was accepted by parliament on the basis of a crucial vote smuggled out of prison in Tiraspol by a member of parliament who had been imprisoned by the Transnistrian authorities since 1992). Unlike his predecessor, the former Gosplan *apparatchik* Ion Ciubuc, Prime Minister Ion Sturza, who took office in March 1999, had a degree in economics and considerable experience in business and banking. Born in 1960, he came from a younger generation of entrepreneurial politicians, and following the appointment of the government the World Bank swiftly came in with support. The situation was so drastic, and the pressure from the World Bank so patent, that moves to press ahead with reform seemed likely to follow. A possible move to a presidential system of rule after a referendum on the issue on Sunday, 23 May 1999, might have had the effect of enhancing the pace. However, the vote did not attain the required level, leading to a drawn-out legal challenge and providing opportunities for political machinations; and in any case, given his past career in the *Komsomol* and the communist party, many inside and outside the country doubted President Lucinschi's reformist credentials.<sup>17</sup>

In identifying eventual membership of the EU as the Sturza government's top foreign-policy priority, however, a strong signal was being sent both to the Moldovan population and to the West concerning the future direction of reform (with perhaps more than an unexpressed hint that the pace, too, would be accelerated).

Nevertheless, whether it takes 15, 25 or 35 years to attain membership, long before that Moldova is likely to be brought within the orbit of the European Union, particularly if, as expected, Romania joins in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Already ambitious plans are being discussed for heavy investment in infrastructure in Eastern Europe, including both east-west and north-south developments that could be of



immense benefit to Moldova. Over the longer term, therefore, there may be grounds for optimism. For many Moldovan citizens today, however, surviving the next two or three years is the height of their ambition.

## Notes

- 1 I am not an economist but a political scientist, so my remarks on the Moldovan economy may not be couched in the kind of terms a professional economist might use. I have accumulated information, however, on the development and performance of the Moldovan economy before and since the establishment of the independent republic, and I acknowledge the assistance of my friend Anatol Gudîm, at present Director of the Center for Strategic Studies and Reforms (CISR), Chişinău, in supplying me with various reports and surveys produced by the Center in the past two or three years.
- 2 This is a more accurate version of the official name Republica Moldovenească Nistreană: 'Transnistria' — not only reflects the view from Chişinău — viewed from there Tiraspol is indeed across the Dnestr; from the left bank, 'Bessarabia' is 'across the Dnestr' — but ignores the fact that the city of Bender (Tighina), part of the self-styled republic, is on the right bank of the river. For convenience, however, I shall make use of the term 'Transnistria'.
- 3 I have been unable to check the original quotation. This version, with its dubious grammar, is taken from *The Republic of Moldova: Overview of the Current Macro-Economic Situation (at the Beginning of 1997)*, Center for Strategic Studies and Reform, Chişinău, July 1997, p. 3.
- 4 *Republic of Moldova: Strategy for Development*, Center for Strategic Studies and Reform, Chişinău, 1998, p. 14.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- 6 Any materials derived from that paper and used below are from a confidential draft dated January 1998. Although marked 'confidential', the material was by and large available to researchers in both Tiraspol and Chişinău.
- 7 *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol. 3, no. 167, Part 2, 27 August 1999. There are limits to flattery, however. On 29 October it was reported that Gazprom was to cut its energy supplies to the republic by 40 per cent from 1 November, because of outstanding debts of \$489 million, of which \$310 million was on the account of Transnistria. In addition, \$277 million in fines for overdue payments were taken into account: *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol. 3, no. 212, Part 2, 1 November 1999.
- 8 *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol. 3, no. 170, Part 2, 1 September 1999.
- 9 *Moldova in Transition: Economic Survey 3*, Center for Strategic Studies and Reform, Chişinău, April 1998, p. 5.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol. 3, no. 128, Part 2, 1 July 1999.
- 12 Interview with *Moldova suverană* ('Sovereign Moldova'), 30 June 1999, quoted in *ibid.*
- 13 *Daily News from Moldova* (at <http://news.ournet.md/>), 25 and 26 October 1999.

- 14 *Daily News from Moldova*, 27 October 1999.
- 15 See *RFE/RL Newsline*, Vol. 3, no. 133, Part 2, 12 July 1999, and articles by Michael Shafir, 'Lucinschii Baba and the Moldovan Parliamentary Deputies', in *ibid.*, and 'Moldova and the Presidential System: Little Country, Big Question', in *ibid.*, no. 136, Part 2, 15 July 1999.
- 16 *Daily News from Moldova*, 29 October 1999.
- 17 To quote Michael Shafir: '... as Aladdin put it, "Who will change old lamps for new ones?" Or, in other words: Will a presidential system fare any better?' in Shafir, 'Lucinschi Baba and the Moldovan Parliamentary Deputies', *RFE/RL Newsline*, Vol. 3, no. 133, Part 2, 12 July 1999.





## Transnistria since 1990 as seen from Chişinău

Natalia Gherman

The dramatic events which took place in the Republic of Moldova in the immediate aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, continue to be crucial for determining the future of the Republic of Moldova as a sovereign state. The evolution of the conflict in the eastern region of the Republic of Moldova (Transnistria), is yet another example of a long-term Soviet strategy which aims at perpetuating Moscow's influence in the former Soviet republics under all circumstances. An overall assessment of the situation in Transnistria since 1990 is beyond the limits of this article. For the purposes of our analysis, therefore, we will focus on three major issues: the security situation in the region; the political settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, and human rights issues.

The events of the 1990s cannot be properly analysed without referring to the strategies of the Soviet Union in the region in the earlier part of the twentieth century. In the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR), founded on the left bank of the River Dnestr opposite the Romanian province of Bessarabia in 1924, the efforts of Soviet ideologues were directed towards cultivating a spirit of 'romano-phobia' among the population. Following the creation of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) during the Second World War, these ideological efforts were supplemented by a policy designed to change the ethnic composition of the republic. The period of forced deportations of the Moldovan population from 1940 to 1949 was one of the most tragic events in the history of the republic. Subsequently, economic incentives were used to encourage emigration to the eastern zones of the Soviet Union. At the same time, the influx of people from Russia and Ukraine into Moldova was encouraged. The eastern part of Moldova on the left bank of the Dnestr — Transnistria — was always more industrialized than the rest of the country, which was yet another Soviet mechanism for making a potential territorial division easier. Those coming from Russia



and Ukraine settled in the more industrialized eastern regions, where they could more easily find employment. The statistical data for 1988, for example, speaks for itself: some 34,500 people left the MSSR for Russia, while 33,900 people from Russia entered the MSSR; some 20,900 people left the MSSR for Ukraine, while 20,800 Ukrainians arrived in the MSSR.<sup>1</sup> Amongst those entering the republic from Russia was the present leader of the separatist Transnistrian regime, Igor Smirnov, who was initially sent to head an enterprise in the town of Bender (Rom. Tighina) in 1987.

Another important feature of the Soviet era, was the excessive militarization of the eastern region of the country. On having completed their tour of duty in the military units on the left bank of the Dnestr river, the officer corps of the Soviet army traditionally settled in Tiraspol and Bender, forming a reserve formation of the army. Consequently, while the autochthonous population in the whole of the MSSR was as high as 65 per cent in 1989, in Transnistria it constituted only 40 per cent of all inhabitants.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the majority of the native population on the left bank of the river was dispersed in the rural areas, making their eventual political consolidation a far more difficult task.

The Russian-speaking population of the industrialized cities in Transnistria proved to be exceptionally well organized for a major resistance to the efforts of Chişinău to transform the MSSR into a sovereign state. The introduction of the law on the functioning of languages on the territory of the republic and the law converting the official language of the country to the Latin script, provoked protests which had clearly been well prepared. Igor Smirnov was there to head the resistance, while the so-called OSTK ('Joint Council of Workers' Unions') was ready to carry out any command of the new leaders. Later on this political organization proved to be the most reactionary force, eliminating any pluralism of opinion in Transnistria.

The available sources of the period clearly demonstrate that the events which took place after 1989 were directed by Moscow. In a desperate attempt to prevent the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a group of deputies called *Soiuz* ('Union') of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, lead by Anatolii Lukianov (one of the main organizers of the 1991 Soviet putsch), instigated separatist movements in the potential break-away republics.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, years of thorough preparation yielded the expected result. Moldova, striving for political independence and the democratization of her society, was confronted with a separatist movement which aimed at the creation of another state within her boundaries. The presence of the Fourteenth Soviet Army in Transnistria and the support of the author-

ities in Moscow for the separatists, indicated that the chances of rapid success for the Moldovan government in a political confrontation would be unlikely.

### *The Security Situation in the Region*

Open confrontation came in 1990 when a group of 64 deputies from Transnistria, elected at a general Moldovan election for the Supreme Soviet, declared the formation of the 'Transnistrian people's congress' and proclaimed the creation of '[...] the Soviet Socialist Dnestr Republic as part of the Soviet Union'.<sup>4</sup> This anti-constitutional act was the beginning of a campaign aimed at the destruction of the state structures on the left bank of the Dnestr and the subsequent violent creation of new, self-styled ones. Since that time, massive and systematic violations of fundamental human rights have taken place in the eastern regions of Moldova. The first armed confrontation took place in the regional centre of Dubăsari (Dubossary) in November 1990. An attempt by the Chişinău authorities to liberate the offices of the regional attorney and the police encountered armed resistance organized by the separatists, resulting in the loss of human life. Thereafter, the process of 'state formation' on the left bank of the Dnestr was pursued with an ever-growing speed. The Soviet putsch in August 1991 had a catalytic effect on the situation. The Supreme Soviet, based at Tiraspol, rapidly adopted laws to establish a 'republican guard', as well as militia formations and a supreme court.

The support of the Fourteenth Army was crucial for the consolidation of the separatist regime. As early as 3 September 1991, Mircea Snegur, president of the Republic of Moldova, issued a decree urging the withdrawal of the military formations of the Soviet army from the territory of the Republic of Moldova. Appealing to the officer corps to ignore Snegur's decree, the separatist leaders encouraged the Russian officers to take part in the creation of 'national guards' and to place the units of the Fourteenth Army under the authority of the Tiraspol regime. Examples of direct involvement by the Fourteenth Army in the Transnistrian conflict have been reported by the media and political analysts around the world. Referring to the 1992 armed conflict in Transnistria, Mark Smith, for example, reported that, 'the Fourteenth Army has supported, armed, and fought alongside the armed militias of the Dnestr republic ...'.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, Mihai Gribincea, one of Moldova's most prominent contemporary historians, has provided evidence of a number of cases of Russian complicity in the establishment of a rival, separatist republic on the



eastern bank of the Dnestr river. The most revealing confirmations are, of course, those provided by the Russian officials themselves, such as Sergei Stankevich, former adviser to President Yeltsin, and Mikhail Kolesnikov, Deputy Head of the Russian General Staff, and one of the protagonists — General Lebed. Even after President Yeltsin had issued a decree proclaiming the transfer of the Fourteenth Army to the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation (April 1992), the army continued its involvement in the events in Dubăsari and Bender in 1992. The situation was aggravated by the presence of the large number of Cossack mercenaries who, ‘... were fighting for mother-Russia on the Dnestr river banks, hundreds of kilometres from the Russian frontiers’. In fact, Gribincea argues that the Russian army continues to provide material, political and ideological support to separatists in the Republic of Moldova.<sup>6</sup> The armed conflict ceased on 21 July 1992 when the presidents of the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation signed the ‘Agreement on the Principles of Peaceful Settlement of the Armed Conflict in the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova’, (hereafter, ‘the 1992 Agreement’).

The problem of the withdrawal of the Fourteenth Army, subsequently re-named as the ‘Operational Group of Russian Forces Temporarily Located On the Territory of the Republic of Moldova’ (OGRF), remains crucial for ensuring stability not only in Moldova but in the region as a whole. In 1992, the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation began negotiations for the withdrawal of the army, resulting in the bilateral withdrawal agreement, signed by both sides on 21 October 1994. The agreement, which envisaged the complete withdrawal of Russian troops from Moldova over a period of three years, has not been ratified by the Russian parliament at the time of writing, and has little chance of being put into force by any composition of the Russian legislative body. The reduction of OGRF personnel, subsequently announced by the Russian side, was part of an overall reduction process taking place in the Russian armed services and was not connected with the bilateral withdrawal agreement.

The Moldovan-Russian agreement, however, is by no means the only framework for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Moldova. The withdrawal can be fulfilled in accordance with the Moldovan constitution, since article 11 proclaims the neutrality of the state and the prohibition of stationing foreign troops on Moldovan territory. Furthermore, a number of international agreements, adopted by the Russian Federation itself, provide an excellent framework for the army’s withdrawal. Among these agreements are the decisions of the 1994 Budapest and 1996 Lisbon

summits of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as well as numerous decisions of the OSCE Ministerial Councils and the resolutions of the Council of Europe. All these documents stipulate the necessity for an early, orderly and complete withdrawal of Russian troops from Moldova. The provisions of the adapted Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (the CFE Treaty), provide another opportunity for the Russian Federation to honour its commitments to withdrawal of its troops from Moldova. The withdrawal of the five types of conventional armaments under the provisions of the CFE Treaty ('Treaty Limited Equipment' or TLE) would constitute a promising start to the withdrawal process. Closely related is the issue of the 'Unaccounted for Treaty Limited Equipment' (UTLE). These are the conventional armaments which were transferred by the Russian army to the separatist paramilitary formations. It is to be stressed that the resumption of control over these armaments by the Russian Federation and their subsequent withdrawal into Russian territory should be of concern to all states which are party to the CFE Treaty. The so-called 'armed forces of the Dnestr Moldovan Republic' represent a major threat to the security and stability of the entire region. They consist of regular formations, Cossack units, popular militia and border guards. Current mobilization estimates of regular and reserve formations in Transnistria who could be called upon in the event of hostilities are as high as 15,000 men.<sup>7</sup>

A major outcome of the 1992 agreement was the creation of a security zone between the right and the left bank of the Dnestr river and the subsequent introduction of peace-keepers from Moldova, Transnistria and Russia. The administration of the security zone is regularly discussed in the framework of the joint control commission composed of the representatives of the three sides. Regrettably, the obstructionist position taken by the Transnistrians for several years, has prevented any progress in reducing military tension in the security zone. Indeed, one of the most flagrant violations of the security zone administration is the production of different types of armaments within the zone by the Tiraspol regime.<sup>8</sup> Evidence already exists that armaments are being smuggled to other European conflict zones, and the geographic location of the production sites in Transnistria threatens the stability of the Balkans.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Political Settlement of the Transnistrian Conflict*

The negotiations for a statute of autonomy for the eastern regions of the Republic of Moldova started in 1994. Despite having signed more than



forty documents aimed at providing a basis for a future statute, the respective sides are no closer to any successful outcome at the time of writing. The intransigence of the Transnistrian negotiators has been internationally recognized. The very fact that Moldova has applied for assistance in mediating the negotiations with Russia, Ukraine and the breakaway republic to the OSCE (which is represented in Moldova by its permanent mission), speaks for itself. Numerous drafts elaborated by Moldovan experts and alternative projects proposed by the mediators themselves, were not acceptable to the Transnistrian side. The 'Memorandum on the Principles of Normalization of the Relations between the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria', together with the joint statement of the mediators, signed on 8 May 1997 in Moscow, represent two of the most important documents. The notion of a 'common state', introduced into the memorandum by the Russian representatives, however, has proved to be a matter of contention between the two sides. Moldova considers that a common state within its frontiers as of 1 January 1990 already exists, the task being now to negotiate the degree of authority for the eastern region within the boundaries of this state. In contrast, Transnistria interprets this provision as a need to create such a common state, which will be composed of two independent entities — the Republic of Moldova and the 'Dnestr Moldovan Republic'. This crucial difference of interpretation does not permit any immediate progress towards a political settlement of the conflict.

### *Human Rights in Transnistria*

Although there is no possibility for this region to be recognized as a subject of international law, the inhabitants of the area are forced to accept citizenship of the self-proclaimed republic. The population is, therefore, denied the right to participate in Moldovan general elections.

The personal security of people is under constant threat from the region's totalitarian regime. Arrests for political motives, together with detention of business people in order to extort money for the maintenance of 'state' structures, are common. The Ilaşcu group, for instance, have been detained since 1992. In spite of the appeals of various international bodies and human rights organizations, the Tiraspol regime refuses to release these political prisoners.

There is no basic educational freedom in Transnistria. The so-called 'educational law of 1992' prohibits the use of the Latin script for the purposes of studying and using the Romanian (Moldovan) language.

Consequently, some 35,000 school children have no possibility to pursue a curriculum compatible with those in the rest of Moldova and are obliged to use Cyrillic script for studying their native language.<sup>10</sup>

## Conclusion

The conflict in Transnistria is the result of the policies the Soviet regime has been implementing in its former republics, which have served to undermine the aspirations for independence of the peoples in those areas. The analysis of the present security situation, the attempts at a political settlement of the conflict and the situation regarding human rights in Transnistria, reveal the current tendency for the conflict to become frozen as a result of outside forces.

The continuing presence of foreign troops on Moldovan soil, together with the threat emanating from the fully equipped paramilitary separatist forces, are factors which challenge the fragile security balance of a sovereign state. In spite of Moldova's efforts to find solutions to these problems within the framework of universally recognized norms and the principles of international law, the search for a political settlement aimed at the creation of an autonomous status for Moldova's eastern region, has not yet yielded the expected results. Human rights violations in the region are a matter of concern not only to the Republic of Moldova but to numerous human rights monitors across the world.

Moldova's own capacity for dealing with these complicated issues is limited. The diversified nature of the conflict, its destabilizing effect for the security of Europe as a whole, should make it a matter of concern to the international community. The political, economic and humanitarian support of the international community will be decisive in achieving a successful settlement of the conflict.

## Notes

- 1 Oazu Nantoi, *Raport cu privire la problema persoanelor intern deplasate în Republica Moldova*, UNHCR Moldova, Chişinău, 1999, p. 4.
- 2 Ibid., p. 5.
- 3 Ibid., p. 6.
- 4 Oazu Nantoi, *Human Rights and Freedoms in the Eastern Region of the Republic of Moldova*, Report of the National Conference on the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in the Republic of Moldova, United Nations Development Programme Moldova, Chişinău, 1998.



- 5 Mark Smith, *Pax Russica: Russia's Monroe Doctrine*, RUSI Whitehall Paper, London, 1993, p. 57; See also John Lough, 'Defining Russia's Relations with Neighboring States', *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 2, no. 20, 1993, p. 54; Renee De Nevers, *Russia's Strategic Renovation*, Adelphi Paper, London, no. 289, 1994, pp. 54–5.
- 6 Mihai Gribincea, *Trupele ruse în Republica Moldova: Factor stabilizator sau sursa de pericol?*, Chişinău, 1988, pp. 24–35 (24).
- 7 Ibid., p. 88.
- 8 Ibid., p. 96.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Nantoi, *Human Rights and Freedoms in the Eastern Region of the Republic of Moldova*, Chişinău, 1998.

# Security Concerns in Post-Soviet Moldova: The Roots of Instability

Trevor R. W. Waters

## *Introduction*

Conflict in Moldova quickened with the nationalist ferment over matters of language, culture and identity which consumed the Soviet republic in 1989 and surfaced with the secession of Gagauzia and Transnistria in 1990. Civil war, continuing difficulties with territorial separatism, ethno-linguistic strife, Romanian irredentism and Great-Russian chauvinism number among the most important security concerns that have plagued the Republic of Moldova since its declaration of independence on 27 August 1991. This article examines some of the background factors which generated such problems (some of which may appear to have a characteristic borderland nature, and may, indeed, be typical of borderland states), and reviews the progress that has been made towards their solution.

## *History and Geography*

The territory of the Republic of Moldova is not coextensive with the historic Moldovan lands which are fragmented at the present time. The 1940 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact allowed the Soviet Union to annex the eastern half of the Romanian province of Moldova and the annexation was confirmed in the 1947 Peace Treaty between the USSR and Romania.

It is worth recalling, however, that Bessarabia (the Russian designation for the territory between the Dnestr and the Prut, derived from an erstwhile Wallachian ruling house of Basarab) was Russian from its liberation from the Turks in 1812 until 1917, when it proclaimed its independence from Russia as the Democratic Republic of Moldova, and joined Romania in 1918.



In accordance with Stalin's 'divide and rule' nationalities policy, two of the three regions of the annexed territory, northern Bukovina in the north and southern Bessarabia in the south, were transferred to Ukraine (and now form Chernovtsy oblast and the southern part of Odessa oblast respectively). A strip of land along the eastern (or left) bank of the Dnestr (Transnistria) was detached from Ukraine, however, and added to the central region of the annexed territory to become (in 1940) the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic and (in 1991) the sovereign Republic of Moldova.

In 1990, the Popular Front of Moldova made strident calls for the reintegration of the 'historic Moldovan lands' of northern Bukovina and southern Bessarabia, while Ukraine flatly rejected what it regarded as irredentist pretensions. In November 1994, however, Moldova and Ukraine signed an agreement which stipulated that the two sides have no territorial claims on each other. That strip of territory along the eastern bank of the Dnestr, however, which constitutes 15 per cent of Moldova's territory and provides the focus for the continuing confrontation, has never been considered part of the traditional Moldovan lands, although it has always contained a sizeable Moldovan population. Prior to the revolution in 1917 that left-bank Dnestr border territory formed part of the tsarist empire and, in 1924, became the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. In Transnistria, then, unlike in western Moldova, sovietization, and with it russification, including the use of the Cyrillic alphabet, was enforced for more than seventy years. Indeed, since the region formed a border area until the Second World War, and was thus ideologically vulnerable because of ethno-linguistic ties with Romania across the Dnestr, sovietization was enforced with especial vigilance and vigour. When the Romanian army — an ally of Nazi Germany — advanced into the Soviet Union during the Second World War it was wholly determined to destroy communism in Transnistria. Excess of zeal in pursuing this aim resulted in brutality and atrocities which linger in the Transnistrian folk memory, reinforcing fear and suspicion of Romania to this day.

Post-war economic policy sought to develop western Moldova as an agricultural area, while industrialization — often of a defence-related nature — was concentrated mainly in Transnistria which is said to contain some 37 per cent of the country's economic potential. Moldovan agricultural development had not, of course, been subject to the Soviet collectivization disasters of the 1920s and 1930s, and the local peasantry on the west bank adapted well to the relatively painless collectivization of the post-war period. As was the case throughout the Soviet Union, the

peasants were allowed to engage in small-scale private enterprise farming. A successful, entrepreneurial peasant farming outlook and mentality survived better than elsewhere in Soviet territory and forms an important element in the mindset of the population in western Moldova (by which is meant that part of the Republic of Moldova lying west of the River Dnestr) today. Agriculture in Soviet Moldova was, on the whole, efficient, productive and successful — in sharp contrast to most other parts of the Union — and some of the best talent took up agricultural management as a career.

Urbanized and heavily industrialized, Transnistria consists of 5 *rayony* (or districts) and the city of Tiraspol. It has a mixed population of 40.1 per cent Moldovans (the largest single ethnic group), 28.3 per cent Ukrainians and 25.5 per cent Russians, according to the last USSR census in 1989. Until the 1960s Moldovans made up the absolute majority on the left bank, but their proportion declined as a result of centrally promoted immigration, particularly from the RSFSR, into the cities to man the factories. This population flow has increased in recent years, and many of today's left-bank inhabitants emigrated from remote areas of Russia during the 1980s, including 'President' Igor Smirnov of the self-styled, breakaway 'Dnestr Moldovan Republic' (hereafter, DMR), who came from Siberia in 1985. Opposite the city of Tiraspol, where the Russians are concentrated and form a majority of the population, on the right bank of the Dnestr is the town of Tighina (Bender), an important junction, linked by rail and road bridges. Bender, too, was industrialized and populated by Russian workers following the Second World War, and became an enclave of the left-bank located on the right bank of the river.

### *Language and National Identity*

Under Gorbachev *demokratizatsiya* had led to demands outside RSFSR for de-russification and thus to strengthening the official role and status of the titular republican language. This manifestly challenged the privileged position of local Russians and russophones in those republics (who were often regarded anyway as occupiers, colonizers, or tools of Moscow). There was a backlash among russophones, especially where jobs were threatened. The ensuing conflict was exploited both by republican nationalists and by communist opponents of reform, thus politicizing the language issue. When republics became independent, enshrining the titular language as the official language was closely bound up with the idea



of establishing and maintaining full independence. By this time, however, Russian and russophone minorities had become identified with opposition to democracy and independence. Finding themselves treated as second-class (and probably disloyal) citizens, they turned to Moscow for help. This only served to confirm the suspicion and mistrust of the newly independent states. Issues of language and national identity fuelled the series of conflicts which led to the break-up of the USSR.

On 31 August 1989, in a highly charged atmosphere of rallies, strikes and demonstrations, Moldova became the first Soviet republic to pass a law that declared the language of the titular nation to be the official language of the republic. The language law also formally proclaimed the common identity of Moldovan and Romanian, and restored the Latin alphabet. (Following their annexation of Moldova in 1940, the Soviets insisted that Moldovan, written in Cyrillic script, was a different language from Romanian in order to promote the idea that Moldovans and Romanians are separate nations.) So important was the adoption of the language law within the context of the flowering of a non-Soviet, Moldovan national identity, that 31 August, Language Day, was subsequently declared a national holiday. 31 August Street is today one of the main thoroughfares in Chişinău, the Moldovan capital.

Despite the fact that the law provided for Russian to be the language of inter-ethnic communication, 100,000 ethnic Russians went on strike in support of retaining only Russian as the official language. The language reform was also unpopular with the Ukrainians and Gagauz, who now had to study a third language, Moldovan/Romanian. Indeed, language was the trigger for secession in Transnistria and Gagauzia. The issue of what to call the language (glottonym) was hotly debated prior to the adoption of Moldova's new, post-Soviet constitution (1994), which defines the state language as 'Moldovan', rather than 'Moldovan (Romanian)' or 'Moldovan which is identical to Romanian', the other options considered. In March and April 1995, thousands of students took to the streets chanting 'Romanian is the official language'.

### *The Strategic Significance of Moldova*

A distinction may be drawn between Moldova's global strategic significance and its regional strategic significance. During the Cold War the territory of Moldova — in peacetime — formed part of the Soviet Union's Odessa military district. In the event of war it would have been mobilized to provide support for a strategic offensive operation in the south-western

theatre of military operations against the Balkans, Greece and Turkey, with the Suez canal and the North African coast as its second strategic objective. The headquarters for this strategic axis was located in Chişinău (Kishinev). With the end of the Cold War, the collapse of communism, and the demise of the Soviet Union, Moldova has lost its global strategic significance. It is interesting to note, however, that General Lebed, the commander-in-chief of Russian forces in the Dnestr Moldovan Republic (DMR) between 1992 and 1995, has described the Dnestr area as 'the key to the Balkans', observing that 'if Russia withdraws from this little piece of land, it will lose that key and its influence in the region'.<sup>1</sup>

### *National Defence and Civil War*

Following the June 1990 declaration on state sovereignty, on 27 August 1991 the Republic of Moldova proclaimed independence and, by September, President Mircea Snegur had already signed the decree that was to lead to the establishment of national armed forces. In addition to the national army which is charged with ensuring the military security of the Republic, there are also the frontier troops of the ministry of national security and the interior ministry's lightly armed *carabinieri* forces for the maintenance of public order. 1992 witnessed the establishment of the ministry of defence, the appointment of the first Moldovan defence minister, and the passing of defence legislation.

Unhappily, the same year also saw the outbreak of a full-scale, local civil war with Transnistrian separatists strongly supported by elements of Russia's highly politicized Fourteenth Army. Whether under the Soviet, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), or Russian flag, throughout 1990 to 1991 and subsequently, the Fourteenth Army covertly provided the Transnistrian separatists with weapons, training facilities, manpower, finance, moral and administrative support; occasionally such transfers included whole sub-units from the Fourteenth Army. This provided a traumatic baptism of fire for the nascent armed forces of the republic: some 500 people were killed, many more wounded, while refugees perhaps numbered 100,000, although exact figures remain unclear.<sup>2</sup>

Since late July 1992 the Moldovan army has been deployed on peace-keeping duties — highly significantly — on the territory of the republic itself. Having failed to secure any UN (or indeed any CIS) involvement in a peacekeeping role, President Snegur was finally constrained by Moscow to accept what was essentially a Russian peacekeeping force. The Yeltsin-Snegur agreement on 21 July 1992 provided for a cease-fire,



the creation of a security zone on both sides of the Dnestr river and the deployment of a joint Russian/Moldovan/DMR peacekeeping force under the day-to-day supervision of a trilateral Joint Control Commission.<sup>3</sup> Originally the peacekeeping forces comprised six Russian battalions (3,600 men), 3 Moldovan battalions (1,200 men), and 3 DMR battalions (1,200 men). As early as September 1992, Moldova publicly challenged the impartiality of the Russian peacekeepers, charging them with allowing the DMR separatists to maintain men and material in the security zone. The DMR, for its part, was able to continue to create and consolidate the structures of an independent 'state' (government departments, armed forces, border guards, banking system, etc) under the protection of the peacekeepers.

### *Politics and Ideology*

The confrontation on the Dnestr is essentially a political struggle. In Moldovan eyes, the political and ideological forces that underpinned the abortive coup of August 1991, viz. hard-line communism, Russian nationalism, the military-industrial complex, and the determination to preserve the Union state, have retained a power base in the heavily militarized region and russified industrial centres on the left bank. Troops of what has now become the Operational Group of Russian Forces in the Dnestr region of the Republic of Moldova (OGRF), commanded by Russian officers with a political axe to grind, so the Moldovans say, furthered and continue to further the cause of local Russian, or other non-indigenous factions, in a former Soviet republic against the properly constituted state authorities of the newly-independent host country. In short, the Russian military actively supported an armed insurgency whose aim was to establish on the territory of an internationally recognized sovereign state a Soviet-style outpost, the so-called DMR, in a post-Soviet world.

The highly sovietized population of Transnistria, reinforced by a Russian industrialized workforce, suspicious of the free-market mentality of the peasantry living on the right bank of the Dnestr, alarmed by the restoration of the Latin alphabet, and by the declaration that Moldovan (i.e. Romanian) was to be the official language of the Republic together with Russian, by the adoption of a version of the Romanian tricolour as the Moldovan flag, and fearful of the possibility of unification of the new state with Romania, naturally enough, saw matters very differently.

On 2 September 1990 Transnistria declared its secession from Moldova and the Transnistrians enthusiastically hailed the attempted coup in

Russia in August 1991 while, from the very beginning, western Moldova resolutely defied the putsch, vigorously supported RSFSR President Yeltsin's democratic stand, and resisted peacefully, yet successfully, military attempts to impose the junta's state of emergency.

The DMR has subsequently played host to numerous representatives of Russia's red-brown (communist-nationalist) ideological forces, including hundreds of Cossack mercenaries determined to 'defend their blood brothers' and to 'hold the frontier of the Russian state', together with a string of virulently nationalistic demagogues like Vladimir Zhirinovsky, Sergei Baburin, Albert Makashov and Viktor Alksnis, the last of whom described the DMR as the base from which the Soviet Union's restoration would begin.<sup>4</sup> Makashov was one of the principal leaders of the Moscow October 1993 insurgency (in which Baburin and Alksnis were also implicated), while Zhirinovsky (leader of the misnamed Russian Liberal Democratic Party which has secured an alarmingly high percentage of the vote in Russian elections) has spoken of transforming Moldova into a Russian *guberniya*, or province. *Sovetskaya Rossiya* has described the DMR as 'an island of Soviet power' and 'a frontier of Russia'.<sup>5</sup>

### *The Ethnic Factor*

The total population of Moldova is 4,367,000 of whom 754,000 live in the capital city, Chişinău. The largest ethnic group, the Moldovans themselves, number 2,800,000 (or 65 per cent of the total population). Of the three other major ethnic groups, the 600,000 Ukrainians (14 per cent) come second with 560,000 Russians (13 per cent) in third place, followed by the 153,000 Gagauz (who constitute 3.5 per cent of the population but who are concentrated in the southern corner of Moldova, along the border with Ukraine). Bulgarians account for 2 per cent of the total population. 70 per cent of Moldova's Russians live in western Moldova, 30 per cent in the DMR. The ethnic mix in the DMR consists of 40.1 per cent Moldovans, 28.3 per cent Ukrainians, 25.5 per cent Russians and various other minor national groups.

The Gagauz are Turkic speaking Orthodox Christians whose ancestors fled Ottoman rule in north-east Bulgaria during and after the Russo-Turkish war of 1806 to 1812. There have never, therefore, been any grounds for religious tension between them and the indigenous population. Most of the refugees settled in Bessarabia, which became Russian territory in 1812. Some 140,000 of Moldova's 153,000 Gagauz are concentrated in south-western Moldova.



The DMR Russians, it must be emphasized, form but a minority in what they regard as their 'little piece of Russia'. Indeed, numerically speaking, they constitute a minority within a minority, for they represent only 30 per cent of Moldova's total Russian population and only 25 per cent of the total population of the left bank. However, given their strong-arm military backing and the *de facto* partition of Moldova, some 170,000 DMR Russians continue to be in a position to constrain severely the social and political choices of the Transnistrian Moldovan and Ukrainian majority ethnic groups whom they have now effectively isolated from the Moldovan heartland and from the political process in Chişinău.

The DMR Russians have never lost an opportunity to play the ethnic card for all that it is worth. Presenting themselves as an unfortunate minority whose human rights were being trampled underfoot by Chişinău's repressive policies of enforced 'romanianization' and desovietization, they have fuelled ultranationalist sentiments in Russia, and prevailed upon Moscow to adopt a robust posture with regard to the protection of Russian interests abroad. They have, of course, succeeded in securing Moscow's 'protection' with the help of Russian peacekeeping forces and the Operational Group of Russian Forces (OGRF).

It is instructive to recall that in Moldova (as throughout the former Soviet Union), administration, the education system and the media greatly favoured the Russian population. Moldovan and Ukrainian schools and publications were far fewer than proportional representation of their populations would entail. Of Moldova's 600,000 Ukrainians, only 52,000 claim to be fully proficient in Ukrainian, while 220,000 say they no longer know their native tongue. Facilities for Ukrainians in the DMR are very poor, and today most Ukrainians there speak Russian.

For all the inflammatory nationalistic and 'pan-slav' rhetoric that still emanates from Tiraspol (and still finds echoes in certain circles in Moscow), and for all the provocative manipulation of the ethnic card and of human rights issues, in general inter-ethnic relations in Moldova at large have not been adversely affected. More than 70 per cent of Moldova's Slavonic population reside in western Moldova and do not appear to feel threatened to any significant extent following Moldovan independence. With few exceptions this Slavonic majority is strongly in favour of Moldova's territorial integrity and the re-integration of Transnistria, and has not sided with the DMR Russians in any way.

Military and para-military forces on both sides, including the combat elements that fought in the 1992 civil war, are ethnically mixed. Casualty figures correctly reflect the ethnic mix of the populations in

question and thus provide further grim evidence that the conflict is not an inter-ethnic dispute. On the left bank, for example, Moldovan casualties predominate, followed by Ukrainians and Russians. However, a great many Russians and Ukrainians — some of whom served with distinction — were killed or injured fighting for the Moldovan central government cause. A 'Transnistrian people' as such does not, of course, exist and the Moldovan civil war has not split the population of Moldova along ethnic lines.

### *The Russian Army in Moldova*

Based in Moldova since 1956, the Soviet Fourteenth (Guards) Army, headquartered in Tiraspol, was transferred to the CIS Armed Forces in January 1992. President Yeltsin's decree of 1 April 1992 subsequently placed what remained of the Fourteenth Army under Russian jurisdiction. Moscow equivocated and prevaricated with respect to the Fourteenth Army's involvement in the 1992 conflict which culminated in the battle for Bender that was, in fact, won by the Dnestr insurgents with substantial support from the Fourteenth Army. The Russian army was said to have remained neutral, to have disobeyed orders, to have intervened as a local initiative, to have been ordered to make a show of force, to defend Russian-speaking areas, and to take retaliatory action against Moldova for committing crimes against Russians.<sup>6</sup>

By late June 1992, when General Alexander Lebed was appointed army commander, Russian combat power in Moldova consisted essentially of one somewhat under-strength and under-equipped motor rifle division: the Fifty-Ninth Motor Rifle Division. Lebed accused Moldova of being a 'fascist state', said its leaders were 'war criminals', called the defence minister a 'cannibal' referred to Moldovans as 'oxen' and 'sheep', and described his army as 'belonging to the Dnestr people'.<sup>7</sup> Lebed predicted the end of Moldova's independence and its return to a reconstituted Union, and declared that the Fourteenth Army would remain in Moldova indefinitely. Russia's Fourteenth Army continued throughout 1993 and beyond to recruit residents of Moldova's Transnistrian region in violation of international law.

In October 1994, Moldova and Russia concluded an agreement for the withdrawal of the Fourteenth Army from Moldova over a period of three years, which for Transnistrian 'President' Smirnov was 'unacceptable', and for Lebed a 'crime'. However, the withdrawal was to be synchronized with the settlement of the conflict in Transnistria. Moreover, from



1994 onwards Russia has sought to make its *de facto* military base in Transnistria *de jure* — a move that Moldova has so far been able to resist firmly.<sup>8</sup>

Following Defence Minister Grachev's April 1995 directive on the reorganization of the Fourteenth Army and Yeltsin's June decree on removing Lebed from military service, Major-General Valeriy Yevnevich was appointed commander-in-chief of the renamed Operational Group of Russian Forces (OGRF) in the Dnestr region of the Republic of Moldova.<sup>9</sup> All members of the OGRF must now hold Russian citizenship. There are hardly any delays over pay. At the OSCE Istanbul summit in November 1999, Russia again undertook to withdraw the OGRF, including the huge stockpiles of munitions located near Cobasna, by the end of 2002. By the turn of the century the overall strength of OGRF had already been reduced to about 2,500 men.

### *Local Autonomy in Gagauz Yeri*

The self-styled Republic of Gagauzia proclaimed its independence from Moldova in August 1990. A six-hundred-strong force of irregulars — the so-called 'Bugeac battalion' (who were supported militarily and politically by the DMR separatists) — was formed to protect the interests of the breakaway republic. To this end the paramilitaries seized weapons and conducted occasional armed raids on government installations in southern Moldova. Following delicate and protracted negotiations between Chişinău and Komrat (the capital of the unrecognized republic), Moldova accorded a 'special judicial status' to *Gagauz Yeri* (the Gagauz Land) in January 1995. Moldova's creation of an autonomous territorial unit as a form of self-determination for the Gagauz and a constituent part of the Republic of Moldova — the first move of its kind by an East European state — has been praised as a potential model for resolving ethnic disputes in post-communist Europe. A referendum was held to determine which villages would join Gagauz Yeri. Georgi Tabunshchik, an ethnic Gagauz, was elected to the post of *bashkan* (or governor), and there were elections to the legislative body for the region.

In June 1995 after the elections, the then prime minister, Andrei Sangheli, declared an end to the conflict between the Gagauz separatists and Moldova. The Bugeac battalion was formally disbanded, an amnesty was granted for the handover of weapons and the paramilitaries were incorporated into the specially created, so-called 'Military Unit 1045' of the Interior Ministry's carabinieri forces. It was to take some while,

as Vasile Uzun, the bashkan's first deputy emphasized at the time, 'for the rule of law to replace the rule of the gun'.<sup>10</sup> Gagauz Yeri remains an economically backward area whose agricultural yield is particularly susceptible to Moldova's recurrent droughts. But Moldova has 'solved the Gagauz problem', as the Turkish defence minister has put it, insofar, at least, that instability in the region no longer represents a threat to the integrity of the state.

### *Partnership for Peace, Neutrality and NATO*

On 16 March 1994, Moldova became the twelfth state (and fifth former Soviet republic) to enrol in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme. (The DMR leadership deplored the fact that Tiraspol had not been consulted.) At the signing ceremony in Brussels, President Snegur highlighted his country's policy of neutrality,<sup>11</sup> pointing out that Moldova did not belong to the military structures of the CIS, and elected — unlike most of the earlier signatories — not to raise the possibility of eventual NATO membership. Snegur also said, however, that Moldova's participation in the PfP programme would help to strengthen the territorial integrity, political independence and national security of his country; moreover, the main obstacle to a settlement of the conflict between Moldova and Transnistria was the presence of Russia's Fourteenth Army on Moldovan territory.<sup>12</sup>

The new constitution adopted by the Moldovan parliament on 28 July 1994 proclaims Moldova a neutral, sovereign, independent and indivisible state, with equal rights for all minorities.<sup>13</sup> Article 11, in particular, stipulates that 'the Republic of Moldova declares its permanent neutrality [and] does not admit the stationing of foreign military units on its territory'. The provisions of article 11 are reiterated in the foreign policy concept adopted by parliament in February 1995: 'The Republic of Moldova is pursuing a policy of permanent neutrality, having undertaken not to participate in armed conflicts, in political, military or economic alliances having the aim of preparing for war, not to utilize its territory for the stationing of foreign military bases, and not to possess nuclear weapons, nor to manufacture or test them'.<sup>14</sup> On 5 May 1995 parliament adopted a national security concept which yet again emphasized that 'Moldova is a demilitarized state and it will not permit the deployment of foreign troops or military bases on its territory and maintains relations of friendship and partnership with all countries'.<sup>15</sup> On 6 June 1995 parliament adopted the military doctrine which 'is determined by foreign and



domestic policy, by the constitutional declaration of permanent neutrality, [and] has an exclusively defensive character'.<sup>16</sup>

Moldova has never regarded NATO enlargement in any way as a threat to its security, nor has it raised objections to eventual Romanian or even Ukrainian membership. Chişinău has always insisted that enlargement should not take place to the detriment of Russia, or without taking Russia's interests into account when admitting new members. Indeed, the importance of a special relationship between NATO and Russia, and between NATO and Ukraine, has been underscored. Chişinău has stressed that NATO enlargement must not create tensions or draw new dividing lines in Europe, but should lead to the consolidation of stability and security on the continent. Moreover, an enlarging NATO must provide security guarantees to neutral countries such as Moldova. Chişinău regards cooperation with NATO primarily as a means to support Moldova's efforts to re-establish territorial integrity and to promote the withdrawal of Russian troops. Tiraspol, by contrast, points to NATO 'expansion' as an additional justification both for the region's separatist course and the continued presence of Russian troops in Transnistria.

### *Moldova and Romania*

For nearly half a century of communist dictatorship following annexation, the border was sealed between Soviet Moldova and Romania. Despite the genuine ethno-linguistic links between Romanians and the majority of Moldovans, the Soviets enforced the notion (which is by no means wholly a fiction) of a separate Moldovan 'people' and 'language', (as distinct from Romanians and Romanian). In an address to the Romanian parliament in February 1991 (on the first official visit to Romania by any leader from Soviet Moldova since its annexation), the then President Snegur strongly affirmed the common Moldovan-Romanian identity, noting that, 'We have the same history and speak the same language', and referred to 'Romanians on both sides of the River Prut'. In June 1991 the Romanian parliament vehemently denounced the Soviet annexation of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, describing the territories as 'sacred Romanian lands'. The Romanian foreign minister subsequently referred to the 'evanescence' of Romania's borders with Bessarabia and northern Bukovina.

Following cultural 'romanianization' and the eventual independence of Moldova, there was a general expectation especially in Romania, though also to some extent in Moldova (despite Chişinău's doctrine of 'two

independent Romanian states'), that the two countries should and would unite. The underlying feeling at the time was that the Romanians wanted their country (which they, at least, saw as having been dismembered by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) to be reunited. The Moldovans, however, after their initial, and perhaps injudicious, acquiescence in the idea during their first stirrings of national self-awareness, clearly no longer shared the Romanians' enthusiasm. In January 1993, four senior parliamentarians, all moderate advocates of unification with Romania, were forced to resign their posts.<sup>17</sup> Throughout 1993 Moldova continued to distance herself from Romania and abandoned her notion of 'two independent Romanian states'. Throughout the 1990s Moldova has striven to establish a truly independent, multi-ethnic state and there has been no desire to trade a Russian 'big brother' for a Romanian one. Opinion polls have consistently revealed that less than 10% of Moldova's population support unification with Romania.

In June 1994 Moldova dropped the Romanian national anthem 'Romanians, Awake!' which it had borrowed in 1991, at which time eventual unification with Romania was envisaged. Chişinău has repeatedly reproached the Romanian government for its unwillingness to come to terms with the idea of real independence for the Republic of Moldova: Romania should let Moldova 'be master in its own home' and 'strictly respect the right of [Moldova's] people to determine their own future'. Moldovan-Romanian treaty negotiations started as long ago as 1992. Given the special nature of their historical, ethnic, cultural and linguistic affinities, Moldovan-Romanian relations are, at the time of writing, very close, yet also rather delicate.

### *Conclusion*

At the turn of the century there are no immediate external threats to the security of Moldova. The strengthening of the country's independence and the restoration of its territorial integrity, together with the withdrawal of the Russian military presence in Transnistria are the major security goals. Despite the 1994 accord on Russian military withdrawal, despite the 1997 Moscow memorandum between Moldova and the DMR committing the two sides to existence within a 'common state', and despite the 1998 Odessa agreements on demilitarization and confidence building measures, the Russian army remains in Transnistria and the DMR leadership loses no opportunity to consolidate and confirm the structures of an independent state. When Igor Smirnov was re-elected, in December 1996,



for another five-year year term as DMR 'president', he vowed that 'we will strengthen the independence achieved through such difficulties and defended with blood', and added, 'Transnistria exists in fact; it is a reality'. The breakaway republic celebrated its ninth anniversary on Independence Day, 2 September 1999.

It seems highly likely that for good, old-fashioned geo-political reasons Moscow will continue to pursue a policy of equivocation and prevarication that has characterized its military involvement in Transnistria since the creation of an independent Moldovan state in 1991. In one guise or another — OGRF, peacekeepers or military bases — there will almost certainly be a Russian military presence in Moldova as the Dnestr conflict smoulders on for quite some time to come.

## Notes

- 1 Interviews with Lebed in *Izvestiya*, 26 February 1993, and on Russian TV, 16 March 1993.
- 2 Moldovan government figures are given in Vasile Nedelciuc, *Respublika moldova*, Kishinev, 1992. For the Transnistrian view see, for example, N. V. Babilunga and B. G. Bomeshko, *Bendery: rasstrelyannyye nepokorennyye*, Tiraspol, 1993.
- 3 *Soglasheniye 'o printsipakh mirnogo uregulirovaniya konflikta v pridnestro-vskom regione respubliki moldova'*, (Agreement on the principles for a peaceful settlement of the armed conflict in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova, signed in Moscow on 21 July 1992, by Presidents Mircea Snegur and Boris Yeltsin.)
- 4 Vladimir Socor, 'Creeping Putsch in Eastern Moldova', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 17 January 1992, pp. 8–13; and Stephen Bowers, 'The Partition of Moldova', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, October 1993, pp. 435–7.
- 5 Vladimir Socor, 'Dniester Involvement in the Moscow Rebellion', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 19 November 1993, pp. 25–32.
- 6 See Vladimir Socor, 'Russia's Fourteenth Army and the Insurgency in Eastern Moldova', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 11 September 1992, pp. 41–8.
- 7 See *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 7 July 1992, and Vladimir Socor, 'Russia's Army in Moldova: There to Stay?', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 18 June 1993, pp. 42–9.
- 8 See Mihai Gribincea, *Trupele ruse în Republica Moldova: Factor stabilizator sau sursă de pericol?*, Chişinău, 1998.
- 9 See Trevor Waters, 'Moldova: Continuing Recipe for Instability', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, September 1996, pp. 398–401.
- 10 Author interview, Comrat, July 1996.
- 11 On 6 March 1994, a sociological poll showed that 95% of the poll participants (i.e. 75% of those on the electoral roll) were in favour of Moldova developing as an independent sovereign state that would forge mutually advantageous bilateral relations with all the countries of the world, and implement a policy

of neutrality: Mayak Radio, Moscow, 5 March and 10 March 1994. Snegur delayed signing up to PfP until the results of the decisive national poll were available. As he left for Brussels he observed that 'the people have decided that we should promote a policy of neutrality': Romanian Radio, Bucharest, 13 March 1994.

- 12 ITAR-TASS, World Service, Moscow, 16 March 1994.
- 13 The new constitution superseded the constitution adopted in 1977 when the republic was part of the former Soviet Union; the new basic law came into force on 27 August 1994, i.e. on the third anniversary of the republic's proclamation of independence.
- 14 *Kontsepsiya vneshney politiki respubliki moldova*, adopted by Parliamentary Resolution No. 368-XII, 8 February 1995.
- 15 Interfax (Moscow), 5 May 1995.
- 16 See 'General Provisions' section, *Doctrina militară a Republicii Moldova* (*Voyennaya doktrina respubliki moldova*), adopted by Parliamentary Resolution No. 482-XIII, 6 June 1995. A summary of the doctrine together with analysis and comment is offered in: Trevor Waters, 'The Republic of Moldova: Armed Forces and Military Doctrine', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 2, no. 2, June 1998, pp. 80–97.
- 17 See Vladimir Socor, 'Moldova: Another Major Setback for Pro-Romanian Forces', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 26 February 1993, pp. 15–21.





## The Conflict in the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova

Adrian Pop

### *The Roots of the Conflict*

Historically a disputed area between the Ottoman Empire, Poland, Ukraine and Russia, the area of land on the left bank of the Dnestr river was never part of an independent Moldova or Romania. From 1924 until 1940, the area had the status of an autonomous republic within the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (known as the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, or MASSR). In late June 1940, when northern Bukovina, a portion of northern Bessarabia and the counties of southern Bessarabia were all incorporated into Ukraine, the remainder of Bessarabia was merged with a portion of the existing Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. The new Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR), representing 'the reunification of the Moldovan population from Bessarabia with the Moldovan population from the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic', was officially incorporated into the USSR on 2 August 1940.<sup>1</sup> The status of the new entity was upgraded and Moldova became one of the constituent republics of the USSR in 1944. Soon afterwards, the MSSR was subjected to the general pattern of Moscow's policy of *divide et impera*. The redrawing of its internal geographic and ethnic borders was accompanied by an active russification of the area. The Russians were encouraged to settle in Moldova, and in particular on the left bank of the Dnestr, throughout the 1950s, 60s, 70s, and even 80s, and were granted most of the commanding posts in industry and administration. The consequence was an ethnic disequilibrium: out of the total population of the Transnistrian region of 780,000, 40 per cent are ethnic Moldovans, 28.3 per cent are Ukrainians and 25.2 per cent are Russians. There is also an urban-rural ethnic imbalance: Moldovans predominate in the countryside, Russians and Ukrainians in the towns. In Tiraspol, the capital of Transnistria, for



example, only 18 per cent of its 195,000 people are Moldovans. Furthermore, although Transnistria accounts for only some 12 per cent of the territory of Moldova and 17 per cent of its population, the region produces 35 per cent of Moldova's total national income, being the most industrialized part of Moldova, the economy of which is otherwise predominantly agricultural. The area also accounts for a sizeable amount of Moldova's electric power-generating capacity and provides vital rail links with Ukraine. Throughout the summer and autumn of 1991, the Transnistrian authorities, exploiting Moldova's dependence on energy and raw material sources as a lever, disconnected Moldova from the only gas pipeline supplying the centre and the south of the country, leaving it with no gas supply.<sup>2</sup> Later, in the early spring of 1999, the Transnistrian separatists tried to use the same lever of economic blackmail to coerce the people located in the Varnița border area into joining their self-proclaimed republic. This is proof of the fact that, economically speaking, without the Transnistrian region, a fully independent Republic of Moldova is hard to conceive.<sup>3</sup>

The Transnistrian region is also a strategic corridor towards the Balkans and Central Europe and, therefore, an important area of deployment for Soviet/Russian military forces. In April 1992, the Fourteenth Army, based in Transnistria, was put under the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation. This, in turn, immediately created a problem concerning its legal status on the territory of a foreign state. An even more delicate problem was generated due to the fact that 80 to 90 per cent of the soldiers and 60 per cent of the officer corps of the Russian Fourteenth Army were permanent residents in the Transnistrian area.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the last few decades, a special bond has developed between the population on the left bank of the Dnestr and the Russian military. As a result, on several occasions Transnistria's own Dnestr Guards, formed in September 1991, with far superior fighting capabilities than those of the Moldovan government, was aided in its anti-constitutional military actions by troops belonging to the Fourteenth Army, 90 per cent of which were stationed in Transnistria. It is symptomatic that between 1991 and 1993, many officers and non-commissioned officers from the Fourteenth Army were transferred to the Transnistrian forces. The Fourteenth Army's former commander, Lieutenant-General Gennady Yakovlev, became head of the defence and security department in the Transnistrian republic.<sup>5</sup> In addition to this, the 'Dnestr' diversionary battalion led by the 'Transnistrian avenger', Colonel Kostenko, proved to be a creation of the Russian special services.<sup>6</sup> On several occasions, Lieutenant-General Aleksandr Lebed, commander of the Fourteenth Army between June

1992 and June 1995, stirred up deep emotions both in the Republic of Moldova and beyond with his inopportune declarations. In January 1993, for instance, he announced that Russia would soon open a consular mission in Tiraspol to grant Russian citizenship to local residents who desired it, as well as a military chair to train officers for the Russian forces at the local university. On the same occasion, previous public admissions that Soviet KGB officers formerly active in the Baltic States were now serving with the region's secret police were confirmed by Colonel Vladimir Gorbov, formerly of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic's KGB.<sup>7</sup>

The Transnistrian leadership's secessionist drive developed within the framework of Moldova's drive for independence from Moscow in the last years of the existence of the Soviet Union. What the Transnistrian authorities feared most was that an independent Moldova would implement political and economic reforms that would put an end to the socialist way of life, and with it their privileges, and would impose a cultural 'romanianization' on the area, preparing the ground for its eventual unification with Romania.

The first signs of civil disobedience came in August 1989, when the Moldovans were considering a new language law proclaiming 'Moldovan' — the same language as Romanian — the state language, and requiring that persons in managerial and civil service positions learn a minimal vocabulary in that language to enable them to communicate with non-Russian speakers.<sup>8</sup> As a result, a two-hour warning strike took place on 16 August in Tiraspol, and almost all of the town's factories shut down on 21 August to protest against the final draft of the law. Soon after, strikes spread to the main towns of the republic, and by 24 August more than fifty factories in Chişinău, Bender (Tighina), Rybnitsa (Rîbniţa), Komrat (Comrat) and other cities had joined the strike begun in Tiraspol. Five days later, when the parliament was considering the law, 80,000 workers were on strike at a hundred factories. When the law was passed on 31 August, the strikes intensified and continued for over a month in Transnistria's urban areas.

In January 1990, following the proclamation of the Gagauz autonomous republic in November 1989, Tiraspol voted to become a self-governing, independent territory, the first vote of its kind pertaining to a city. Bender followed suit soon afterwards. Following the adoption of the tricolour flag, an adaptation of the Romanian flag, as the MSSR's official symbol in April 1990, the local soviets of Tiraspol, Bender, and Rybnitsa refused to recognize it and continued to fly the communist flag.<sup>9</sup> On 19 August 1990, at a congress of Gagauz 'people's deputies' that took



place in Komrat, a Gagauz Soviet Socialist Republic was proclaimed. Following the same pattern, on 2 September 1990 in Tiraspol, an extraordinary congress of soviets' deputies proclaimed the Transnistrian Soviet Socialist Republic as part of the USSR.

On 3 September 1990, in order to counter the territorial dissolution of the republic, the Supreme Soviet of Moldova introduced the presidential rule, declaring the 'congresses' in Komrat and Tiraspol as anti-constitutional and the secessions as illegal. The Gagauz decision to hold elections in order to legitimize their republic led to the first outbreak of violence. As the election date approached, rival Gagauz and Moldovan political forces started to recruit 'volunteers'. Militiamen from Transnistria entered the Gagauz region to support their fellow secessionists. Facing this potentially dangerous ethnic tension, on 26 October the Moldovan president, Mircea Snegur, declared a state of emergency in the five southern counties which comprise the Gagauz republic and despatched Moldovan Interior Ministry (MVD) troops to the region. Two days later, on 28 October 1990, the Gagauz leaders managed to elect their own Supreme Soviet. On 2 November, in the run-up to elections, militiamen seized the city soviet building in the city of Dubossary (Dubăsari) as part of their 'preparation' for the elections. When the republican forces sought to retake the buildings, new militants joined forces on both sides and the mounting tension degenerating into a bloody conflict.<sup>10</sup> Finally, on 22–25 November, following the example of their Gagauz counterparts, the Transnistrian separatist leaders organised elections for the 'Supreme Soviet of the Dnestr Moldovan Republic'.

Proof of the fact that Moscow did not play the role of a neutral spectator to all these events is revealed by the decree issued by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev on 22 December 1990. The decree requested that the Moldovan parliament renounce its belief that the proclamation of the MSSR in August 1940 was illegitimate and to annul the new language law passed in August 1989. Furthermore, according to Gorbachev's proclamation, the integrity of Moldova was to be guaranteed only within the USSR.

The fact that, despite its ethnic connotations, the conflict in Transnistria was primarily a political and ideological one, was revealed on the occasion of the August 1991 *coup d'état* in Russia. Whereas the Chişinău leaders promptly condemned the organizers of the coup, the separatists in Tiraspol, whose minds were set on reconstituting the Soviet empire, fully supported them. On 27 August 1991, at the request of about 600,000 representatives of all Moldovan districts, the parliament in Chişinău proclaimed the Republic of Moldova as a 'sovereign, independent, and

democratic state, free to decide its present and future without any interference from outside'.<sup>11</sup>

On 2 March 1992, the Republic of Moldova became a member of the UN — an event which suggested that the international community regarded the breakaway Gagauz and Transnistrian state entities as illegal. On the same day, and as a gesture of frustrated retaliation, the separatists provoked the incident in Dubăsari that was to become the beginning of the armed conflict which lasted from March to July 1992.

On 1 April 1992, President Yeltsin issued an important decree that transferred the Fourteenth Army to Russian jurisdiction. Consequently, following the international recognition of Moldova's independence, its status became that of a foreign army illegally occupying the territory of a sovereign state. Totally ignoring this situation, on 19 May 1992, the commander of the Fourteenth Army issued the order to prepare its troops for 'ground actions'. Light and heavy weaponry was delivered to the paramilitary units of the separatists. On 24 May, the deputy supreme commander of the CIS, General Stolearov came to Tiraspol, declaring that Transnistria and the Fourteenth Army represented Russian geopolitical interests in the area. Encouraged by Moscow, the separatists organized a provocation in Bender. When the Moldovan authorities brought more troops to Bender, at the request of the local police, the units of the Fourteenth Army openly joined ranks with the separatists, participating in the fighting between 19 June and 7 July. Immediately following the outbreak of hostilities in Bender, and as a consequence of the success in combating the Moldovan military, General Lebed assumed operational leadership of the Fourteenth Army. He had been sent earlier to the region, clandestinely, under the name of 'Colonel Gusev' by the Russian ministry of defence. Lebed was now in charge of one of the largest arsenals of the former Soviet regime, which could be used in the event of a reconstitution of the Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup> Hence, as most of the available sources suggest, it is hard to believe that there was no advanced planning undertaken by the Kremlin or the Russian defence ministry for use of the Fourteenth Army in Transnistria, despite the claims of some Russian commentators.<sup>13</sup>

Eventually, on 7 July 1992 at Limanscoe in Ukraine, the military representatives of Russia, Moldova and the Transnistrian republic agreed to an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons. On 15 July in Varnița, and on 17/18 July in Bender, however, the separatist guards and their Cossack allies broke the ceasefire. Finally, on 21 July, after negotiations pursued through diplomatic channels, the Moldovan president and President Yeltsin signed a military convention providing for the



deployment of 'disengagement forces' from Russia, Moldova and Transnistria. Thus, in a single move, Russia managed to eliminate two potential major players in the Transnistrian conflict: Romania and Ukraine.<sup>14</sup>

### *The Internationalization of the Conflict Resolution*

Initial international efforts to achieve a peaceful solution to the conflict were complicated owing to the existence of two different regimes for monitoring the ceasefire and disengagement of troops: a quadripartite grouping, involving Moldova, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine; and a tripartite grouping, comprising Moldova, Russia, and Transnistria. Owing to Moscow's interest in remaining the sole arbiter and dealing directly with Chişinău (the Transnistrian area, at this point in time, being irrelevant), the quadripartite framework quickly became obsolete. Another striking feature regarding the peace process was the fact that the Fourteenth Army, which had been instrumental in generating the conflict and had given arms and other support to the separatist forces, constantly aimed at performing the role of 'peacekeeper' in the old tradition of the wolf guarding the sheep.

International efforts were initiated on 20 March 1992 in Kiev when the member states of the CIS, including Moldova, Russia and Ukraine, adopted a declaration on the situation in the Transnistrian district of the Republic of Moldova in which they reaffirmed their support for the territorial integrity of Moldova.

On 23 March 1992 the ministers of foreign affairs of Moldova, Russia, Romania and Ukraine issued a declaration in which the preservation of the territorial integrity and independence of the Republic of Moldova was reiterated as being a fundamental part of the settlement of the conflict. A mechanism for political consultation among the four states was also created. On 6 April, during the first meeting under the terms of political consultation, a quadripartite commission was set up to implement decisions regarding a ceasefire and disengagement of forces. During the next meeting, on 17 April 1992, in which a representative of the chairman-in-office of the CSCE Council was present as an observer, the ministers approved the status of the commission. Unfortunately, these efforts did not meet with success, and as already noted, an alarming escalation of the armed conflict took place at the end of June. On 25 June 1992, on the occasion of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation summit, the presidents of the four states issued a communiqué concerning the situation in the left-bank Dnestr area. They proposed to the parties involved in the

conflict an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, the disengagement of the warring parties within twenty-four hours and the creation of security zones and corridors for the civilian population. The communiqué announced also that the Fourteenth Army should remain neutral and that Russia and Moldova should begin negotiations on the army's status and the timetable for its withdrawal. The presidents of the four states also appealed to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the CSCE and the United Nations to participate actively in the resolution of the conflict.

In July 1992 a new, bilateral phase in international efforts to solve the conflict by peaceful means began. The presidents of Moldova and Russia met twice in Moscow, on 3 and 21 July 1992. During the second meeting — attended also by representatives of the Transnistria region — they agreed on a communiqué announcing the principles of conflict resolution: respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova; respect for human rights, including those of national minorities; a definition of the special status of the left-bank Dnestr region within the framework of the Republic of Moldova; the right of the Transnistrian population to decide its future in the event of a change in state regime in the Republic of Moldova; and a rejection of any actions preventing a peaceful solution to the conflict. The agreement signed on the same day (21 July 1992) provided for an immediate ceasefire and the disengagement of armed forces over a period of seven days in order to enable the setting up of a security zone between the parties. In addition, the agreement foresaw the setting up of a Tripartite Commission of Control (to include Moldova, Russia, and Transnistria) in Bender, which was authorized to take advantage of the presence of military observers nominated under previous quadripartite agreements, to take decisions, and to use military contingents supplied by the three parties. Bender was declared a zone with enhanced security and the Fourteenth Army was commanded to remain neutral, the army's status and time-table for withdrawal being the object of future negotiations between Moldova and Russia.<sup>15</sup>

After its admission to the CSCE on 30 January 1992, the Moldovan government, realizing that it had little leverage with Russia, tried to internationalize the Transnistrian issue. Thus, from a very early stage in its development, the Transnistrian conflict entered the CSCE agenda. Following an appeal by the Moldovan government, the chairperson-in-office of the CSCE announced her intention to appoint a personal representative to investigate the situation at the fifteenth meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) on 14 August 1992. Following visits



to Moldova (including Transnistria), Romania, Ukraine and the Russian Federation, the personal representative submitted his recommendations. This led to the decision of the CSO on 4 February 1993 to send a CSCE mission to Moldova. The mission, which was deployed in Moldova from April 1993, laid out the basis for future negotiations. It recommended that the Transnistrian region should be granted a special juridical status *within* the Republic of Moldova. The recommendation was flexible enough to provide for the preservation of the territorial integrity of the republic and to counter Tiraspol's insistence on forging a 'confederation' with Chişinău. Additionally, in an attempt to counter the Transnistrian leaders' tendency to block the negotiations regarding the withdrawal of the Russian forces by making their agreement conditional upon Transnistria obtaining a status akin to that of a separate state, the CSCE mission endorsed the position of the Moldovan government that the withdrawal of Russian forces should be unconditional. But the mission was only partly successful in carrying out its mandate. Whereas the Moldovan government was fully co-operative, the Transnistrian authorities, probably with Russian support, prevented the mission from attending the meeting of the Joint Control Commission (JCC), which had been convened to supervise the implementation of the July 1992 agreement. On the grounds of alleged safety risks to its members, the Transnistrian authorities also obstructed the JCC's free movement in the security zone. After several appeals by the CSO of the CSCE, and more than a full year of negotiations, an agreement on the principles of co-operation between the CSCE mission and the JCC was signed on 20 July 1994.<sup>16</sup>

### *Five Years of Deception (1994–1999)*

On 28 April 1994, Mircea Snegur and Igor Smirnov signed the Parcani agreements that marked the beginning of negotiations regarding the status of Transnistria. Soon afterwards, the Moldovan side confirmed its willingness to reach a lasting political settlement by inserting into the new constitution, adopted by the Moldovan parliament in July 1994, a provision (article 111) stating that 'special conditions and forms of autonomy, defined according to special statuses by organic laws, can be granted to the localities on the left bank of the Dnestr river'. Unfortunately, Moldova's willingness to give a special status with large self-governing competence to the eastern districts of the country, within a united and undivided Republic of Moldova, was not met with a similar openness by the Transnistrian authorities which kept insisting on the

creation of an independent state. The irreconcilable position taken by the leaders in Tiraspol, was illustrated by the celebration by the Transnistrian leaders of 'Independence Day' on 4 September 1995.<sup>17</sup> The 'Declaration of the Statehood of the Moldovan Trans-Dnestr Republic' was issued on 5 February 1998. In addition to this, the Tiraspol regime has constantly tried to obstruct the activity of the OSCE mission in Moldova, culminating in its declaration in March 1997 which pronounced that the head of the mission, Ambassador Donald Johnson, was a *persona non grata*.<sup>18</sup>

Eventually, partly due to the mediation of Russian Foreign Minister Evgheni Primakov, Tiraspol was forced to accept an article referring to a common state in the memorandum which formed the basis for future negotiations. Furthermore, on 20 March 1998, agreements on preliminary confidence building measures between Chişinău and Tiraspol were signed in Odessa, which included the reconstruction of the bridge in Dubăsari, one of the two bridges destroyed during the 1991 conflict.

Despite the conclusion of hostilities, the so-called 'Dnestr Moldovan Republic' has become a centre for the production and sale of all kind of weapons (the artillery systems BM-21 'GRAD', mine launchers, anti-tank grenade launchers, anti-personnel mines, and so on). There is plenty of evidence that the area has become a bridge in the international arms trade — arms originating from this region have been used in military conflicts in Russia and the Caucasus — and that Russian and Ukrainian mafiosi have shown an increasing interest in acquiring weapons from the region.

With regard to the issue of the withdrawal of the Fourteenth Army, on 21 October 1994, prime ministers Victor Chernomyrdin and Andrei Sangheli signed an intergovernmental 'agreement on the legal status, procedure and timetable of the withdrawal of Russian military units temporarily located on the territory of Moldova'. This document provided for the full withdrawal, within three years of signing, of the Russian forces and their equipment from Moldovan territory. This is in full accordance with the Moldovan constitution which explicitly forbids the deployment of foreign troops on the country's territory (article 11). Although Moldova had originally desired a faster timetable for withdrawal, the government finally accepted the Russian argument that, given available railway capacity, some three years would be necessary to transport the Fourteenth Army, together with its ammunition, back to Russia. In addition to this, the Moldovan authorities had to commit themselves to build accommodation in Russia for the returning armed forces.

In practice, the agreement was rendered inoperative from its inception due to the reinterpretation of two clauses by the Russian side. The first one concerns the 'synchronization' of the withdrawal with the final



political settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. In other words, the very army which had triggered the conflict was to withdraw only if and when resolution of the conflict was achieved. It is interesting to note that the Russian foreign ministry reiterated this position even after February 1996, when Russia was admitted to the Council of Europe. This was stated in total disregard of one of the explicit conditions of Russia's acceptance on the Council, namely, to begin the withdrawal of troops within six months of admission. The second reinterpretation refers to the fact that while the agreement spoke of synchronizing the two processes of withdrawal and conflict resolution within the three-year period, Moscow has insisted on an open-ended time-scale to settle the conflict.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, while initially defining the October 1994 agreements as an executive agreement, which did not require parliamentary ratification, the Russian government changed its position immediately upon signing and submitted it for ratification to the Duma. In its turn, the Duma voted against troop withdrawal and in favour of Transnistria's secession from Moldova. The end result was that in contrast to the Moldovan government, which ratified the agreement promptly, at the time of writing, the Russian Federation had not yet fulfilled internal procedures for the agreement to come into force, more than five years after signing the agreement.

Moreover, President Yeltsin, the Russian foreign ministry, and the Russian military jointly requested, on several occasions, that the Moldovan government grant the Russian troops peacekeeping status, as well as basing rights, as a rationale for keeping the Fourteenth Army in Moldova. At times, units of the Army — renamed the Operational Group of Forces in Moldova in the summer of 1995 — even transferred from the left bank of the Dnestr to Bender, which is within the right bank security zone, for 'peacekeeping' duties, thus violating the Yeltsin-Snegur agreement which denied the Fourteenth Army a peacekeeping mandate.<sup>20</sup>

In spite of these actions, in February 1997 President Yeltsin reaffirmed Russia's commitment to withdraw its troops.<sup>21</sup> In fact, by that time, a significant reduction of Russian troops had already taken place. From the 30,000 Soviet troops that were originally stationed in Moldova, the strength of Russia's Fourteenth Army deployed in the Transnistria region had dropped to approximately 6,000 troops by 1997. At the same time, however, the number of Russian soldiers that had joined either the Transnistrian army or the peacekeeping forces in the region had grown.<sup>22</sup>

Recently, another twist in the official Russian attitude towards the issue of troop withdrawal has been discernable. As posited on 17 March 1999 by Vladimir Rahmanin, the spokesman for the Russian foreign ministry,

Russia is not considering the withdrawal of its troops from the Transnistrian area for the time being, but only the implementation of the weapon and ammunition withdrawal plan for the ex-Fourteenth Army which was agreed on 23 December 1997. Rahmanin added that only the completion of a bilateral protocol between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Moldova concerning military property could provide the necessary legal basis for an eventual withdrawal of the Russian troops from Transnistria.

Another source of concern closely connected with the presence of the Russian troops is the issue of withdrawing the military equipment and weapons of the breakaway Transnistrian army. In accordance with the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty and its provisions regarding unrecorded equipment, the weapons and military equipment held by the separatist forces have to be withdrawn into Russian territory, due to the fact that they originally came from the weapon stores of the Russian troops deployed in Transnistria. Quite apart from the fact that these weapons have become the object of 'dirty deals', weapon stores such those in Cobasna (Kolbasna), a town near the Ukrainian border, present the area with security risks not only because of their military potential, but also, since they contain old ammunition that cannot be withdrawn and has to be destroyed on the spot, they could well have damaging ecological consequences.<sup>23</sup>

Recent developments, including the decision of the Russian Duma early in March 1999 to declare the Transnistria region an area of exceptional strategic interest, suggest that the Russians envisage the formation in Moldova of a territory with the status of the Kaliningrad region. Taking into consideration the possible establishment of official inter-state relations between the Republic of Moldova and the Transnistrian republic, the tentative opening of a Russian consulate in Tiraspol, as well as the Russian reference to the Fourteenth Army's 'pacifying' role in the region, it appears that the prospects of solving the Transnistrian dispute are even more uncertain than they were five years ago.<sup>24</sup>

## *Conclusion*

First, and contrary to the commonly-held view, the Transnistrian issue began not so much as an ethnic or national conflict, but as a political and ideological one. Soon it acquired an important economic component, as well as a crucial strategic dimension. Secondly, the presence of the Russian Fourteenth Army in the Transnistria region has been a constant military,



material and politico-moral support for, and a guarantee of, the separate status of the self-proclaimed Dnestr Moldovan Republic, as well as a visible symbol of the Republic of Moldova's 'limited' sovereignty and a continuing threat to its independence. The continuous presence of Russian forces in the region has a potential destabilizing effect on countries neighbouring Moldova, such as Ukraine and Romania. Thirdly, the Transnistrian regime lends its support to dissenting movements throughout the former Soviet states. The mafia-style government in Tiraspol has become part of an entire network of criminal structures throughout the CIS. Finally, in spite of extensive efforts at conflict resolution at the international level (CSCE/OSCE, UN, NATO), as well as at the quadrilateral (Moldova-Romania-Russia-Ukraine), trilateral (Moldova-Russia-Transnistria, and Moldova-Russia-Ukraine, respectively), and bilateral levels (Russia-Moldova, and Moldova-Transnistria, respectively), little progress has yet been made towards reaching 'normalcy'.

### Notes

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- 15 Rotfeld, *Interim Report*, pp. 7–10.
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